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MORE (OR LESS) ON GLOBALIZATION

PAUL M. SWEEZY

VOL. 49
4

THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION IN SOUTH AFRICA

BETH S. LYONS

THE MANY LIVES OF MERIDEL LE SUEUR

ALAN WALD

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Free Market Democracy and Global Hegemony by John Bellamy Foster

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NOTES FROM THE EDITORS:

In its most recent issue (July 17th) Doug Henwood's excellent *Left Business Observer*, now in its seventh year of publication, highlights what may come to be seen as an important turning point in current economic history. The gist of it is that Alan Greenspan and his supporters at the Federal Reserve have come to the conclusion that inflation is no longer a serious problem and the real threat today is deflation. "For all the bad press that inflation gets, deflation is generally far worse for all but the richest and best-positioned.... Greenspan and Co. might not fear an exact replay of the 1929-32 collapse, but clearly that's the 'it' that central bankers don't want ever to happen again" (to paraphrase the title of Hyman Minsky's classic book *Can 'It' Happen Again?*).

Henwood remarks that "we haven't had a deflation—a period of falling prices and collapsing incomes for nearly 70 years." But, as of the

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MORE (OR LESS) ON GLOBALIZATION

by PAUL M. SWEEZY

Much has been written about "globalization" in the last few years. It is not my intention to add to this literature but only to put the topic into the context of my own understanding of the history of capitalism

Globalization is not a condition or a phenomenon: it is a process that has been going on for a long time, in fact ever since capitalism came into the world as a viable form of society four or five centuries ago; (dating the birth of capitalism is an interesting problem but not relevant for present purposes). What is relevant and important is to understand that capitalism is in its innermost essence an expanding system both internally and externally. Once rooted, it both grows and spreads. The classic analysis of this double movement is of course Marx's *Capital.*

But Marx never raised the question whether a fully globalized capitalism, i.e., with no more non-capitalist space to move into, would be viable. The reason, of course, was that he expected capitalism to be overthrown and replaced by another system long before its spatial limits had been reached. He did not ask, hence did not try to answer, whether a fully globalized capitalism would be able to survive, let alone flourish, by entirely *internal* expansion.

Paul M. Sweezy is co-editor of *Monthly Review.*

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It was left for Marx's followers to wrestle with this and related questions. The boldest and in some ways the most interesting attempt was that of Rosa Luxemburg in her magnum opus *The Accumulation of Capital* (1912). She put forward the theory that, since its earliest days, capitalism had lived, and could only live, by expanding into surrounding non-capitalist space. Her answer therefore was that the using up of this space would bring a final crisis from which there would be no escape.

Lenin, by contrast, focused not on capitalism as a whole but on capitalism as a collection of units in which the stronger ones competed among themselves for control of the weaker, including remaining non-capitalist areas. This was the core of his *Imperialism: The Latest Stage of Capitalism*, written during the First World War and itself providing a wealth of supporting empirical evidence. This struggle among the leading imperialist powers tended to weaken the capitalist system as a whole and opened the way for revolutions from below, especially the Russian Revolution, which threatened the continued viability of capitalism. The system, however, did recover, and soon after the war the imperialist powers resumed their internecine struggles, now complicated by the existence of a major non-capitalist power. This renewed struggle climaxed with the Second World War, a new round of revolutions, especially the Chinese Revolution, the emergence of the Untied States as the sole superpower, the division of the world into two parts: the capitalist part under U.S. dominance, and the non-capitalist consisting mainly of the Soviet Union and the Peoples Republic of China. The ensuing conflict between the two parts, known as the Cold War and usually thought of as being between two groups of states, was actually much more complicated, including major hot wars, guerrilla wars, attempted revolutions, and successful counter-revolutions.

Lasting almost all of the second half of the twentieth century, the Cold War ended with the restoration and triumph of capitalism on a truly global scale. But this outcome was anything but the result of a smooth process of capital expansion within or beyond its traditional limits. Violence of various

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kinds played an enormous role, and there are large areas in the formerly non-capitalist countries where capitalism has been proclaimed, legalized, and deliberately planted, but where there is absolutely no guarantee that it will take hold and grow in a "normal" way. Furthermore there have been changes in capitalism as it matured in its traditional stronghold (the United States, the European Union, Japan, and the former colonial countries) that pose serious questions about what the continued expansion of capitalism implies in the post-Cold War period.

What I have in mind here are the three most important underlying trends in the recent history of capitalism, the period beginning with the recession of 1974-75: (1) the slowing down of the overall rate of growth, (2) the worldwide proliferation of monopolistic (or oligopolistic) multinational corporations, and (3) what may be called the financialization of the capital accumulation process. This has of course been a period of quickening globalization, spurred on by the improved means of communication and transportation, but the three trends in question are certainly not caused or generated by globalization. Rather, all three can be traced to changes internal to the capital accumulation process, the beginning of which go back about a hundred years to the concentration and centralization movements that characterized the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and marked the transition from early (competitive) capitalism to late (monopoly) capitalism. Interrupted by the First World War and its aftermath, the impact of this transition hit with full force in the great Depression of the 1930s, from which there was no spontaneous recovery and which gave strong evidence of being the beginning of a period of secular stagnation and decline. Once again, however, world war came to the rescue and, together with its ensuring aftermath and the Cold War, produced what has come to be known as capitalism's "golden age" (1950-70). This came to an end in the recession of 1974-75 and was followed by the reassertion and intensification of the trends dating back to the turn of the century:

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retarded growth, increasing monopolization, and the financialization of the accumulation process.

These three trends are intricately interrelated. Monopolization has contradictory consequences: on the one hand it generates a swelling flow of profits, on the other it reduces the demand for additional investment in increasingly controlled markets: more and more profits, fewer and fewer profitable investment opportunities, a recipe for slowing down capital accumulation and therefore economic growth which is powered by capital accumulation.

The foregoing describes what happened during the 1920s, a decade characterized by a persistent rise of underutilized productive capacity in industry after industry, culminating in the collapse of 1929-33. Already at that time there was a growing tendency for profits that could not find profitable outlets in real capital formation to be diverted into purely financial and mostly speculative channels. Hence the spectacular stock-market boom and crash of the late 1920s. The same double process of faltering real investment and burgeoning financialization reappeared in the "golden age" of the post-Second World War decades and has persisted with increasing intensity to the present.[1]

All of this certainly takes place in a context of continuing globalization which put its imprint on the way the various processes play themselves out. But globalization is not itself a driving force. It remains what it has been throughout the period we think of as modern history: the always expansive and often explosive capital accumulation process.

NOTES

1. The two forms of investment, real and financial, are of course related, though not in the simplistic (and mostly wrong) way mainstream economics takes for granted. For a fuller discussion of these processes, see Harry Magdoff and Paul Sweezy, *Stagnation and the Financial Explosion* (Monthly Review Press, 1987).

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BETWEEN NUREMBURG AND AMNESIA: THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION IN SOUTH AFRICA[1]

by BETH S. LYONS

The conscious crafting of an honest history by a state commission is a rare enough event to justify our calling your attention to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. But this writing of history is incomplete, in the same degree as the process of change in South Africa. Certain brute facts are ignored and avoided, and this avoidance was the condition of the bargain accepted by the ANC. As per South Africa's Freedom Charter, now it can in some meaningful sense be said that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white." But what *belongs to* whom *is the question left unaddressed as the very condition of the transition negotiations, transferring its tension into all aspects of that transition, not least any permitted debate over present remedies for a history of injustice.*

The amnesty provisions of the Constitutional compromise are also the source of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As Beth Lyons asks, was amnesty too high a political price to pay to gain the possibility of a transition to majority rule while averting civil war? When considering this fascinating and hotly debated topic, do not forget the forbidden question that gives it force. Was placing the pre-existing structure of ownership and economic control beyond the bounds of permitted question too high a price to pay? The displacement of the (prohibited) second question into the (permitted) first question is the secret of the process on which we focus. —The Editors

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Beth S. Lyons interned at the TRC's Capetown office in late 1996, and returned to Capetown in May 1997 to observe the Commission's hearings. She is an activist and lawyer, and currently an alternate representative to the United Nations for the International Association of Democratic Lawyers.

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A neutral process and an unneutral past

It is clear that a new South Africa will have to deal with its history in the transition away from apartheid. But, how South Africa will undertake this challenge, whether it can transform it into an active, integral component of building a new society, is of paramount significance. In a uniquely transparent process, a quest for truth aimed at the goal of national unity and reconciliation, is being publicly conducted. Whether and how the truths of the past can be forged into a common history that can serve to reconcile a divided county and reconstruct a new society is an open question. The workings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), charged with this task, are therefore of uncommon interest.

The TRC evolved out of the negotiated settlement. Official negotiations, in which the ANC and National Party were the dominant players, commenced in December 1991 with twenty-six partners. At the time of establishing the Transitional Executive Council in September 1993, seven months prior to the 1994 elections, nineteen remained. After the ANC's electoral victory in 1994, it was noted that the ANC "has taken formal control of the state, but the transition itself still remains hostage to the vicissitudes of the old order." The cohesion and strength of the right wing and state military and security forces was a major factor that informed choices at the negotiating table. A result of these deliberations was an Interim Constitution (1993) in which the Post-amble of National Unity and Reconciliation provides for the granting of amnesty to advance reconciliation and reconstruction, and for its legislative implementation.

The negotiated settlement has been an unsettled issue. Four years ago, at an early and important International Conference held in support of the ANC in Johannesburg, Jacob Zuma, then Deputy Secretary General, made the first presentation on the transition to democracy. He was sharply questioned by a critic in the audience of activists from international support movements: Didn't the ANC sell out in negotiations? He responded that the colonialists are "part of

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us and part of the solution ... Unlike [situations] where they 'pack their bags and go home' to the mother country, they live here ... South Africa is the mother country."

Zuma's response affirmed the basic tenet of the Freedom Charter contained in its Preamble "... that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people ..." This is the new government's mandate, but whether and how all who live in it are part of building a new, democratic South Africa is still contentious.

For this reason, the amnesty provisions resulting from the compromise is the focus of much of the debate surrounding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Was amnesty too high a political price to pay for the liberation movement to gain the possibility for a transition to majority rule while averting civil war? And is amnesty, now being implemented under an ANC led and dominated government, consonant with the aims of the ANC as a liberation movement?

The schizophrenic reality of the ANC as a state power and the ANC as a liberation movement permeates the political context. And the Commission, as a state created but independent entity bound by law and with its leadership and many of its commissioners and staff identified with the liberation movements, is affected by this reality. The tension between a process that is procedurally neutral and impartial by statutory definition, but in substance is one that unleashes the torrents of anger at injustice, is both the Commission's strength and its most vulnerable point. The strength is that it offers victims of human rights violations a state created forum in which to be publicly acknowledged, and fixes in historical memory the social context in which these violations occurred. But in so doing, it cannot avoid the intrinsic tension between the Commission's objective to achieve national unity and reconciliation as well as the just resolution of individual human rights violations. The Commission sometimes functions as a quasi-court: it has the judicial trappings of sworn witness testimony, subpoena power, investigators, cross-examination at amnesty hearings. And, like courts, it often hears many truths about the same

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events. But the Commission is not a juridical body; it cannot mete out punishment, nor can it transform truth into justice.

Using State Power to Build a Human Rights Culture: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa

Minister of Justice Dullah Omar explains the significance of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as part of the new government's commitment to building a human rights culture. Thus "the people of South Africa [can] transcend the divisions and strife of the past, which generated gross violations of human rights, the transgression of humanitarian principles in violent conflicts and a legacy of hatred, fear, guilt and revenge ... these can ... be addressed on the basis that there is a need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for *ubuntu*, but not for victimization." *Ubuntu*, "the essence of being human" in the words of Commission Chairperson Archbishop Desmond Tutu, is the driving force of the Commission.

Respect for human rights is without question the outstanding essence of the new democratic state. The depravity of the former apartheid white society is illustrated by the criminal proceedings against former Captain Eugene de Kock. He was convicted of 104 charges, ranging from murder to attempted murder to torture in the counterinsurgency activities of the notorious Vlakplass unit he commanded in the mid-eighties and Koevoet ("crowbar"), a police counter-insurgency unit in Namibia of which he was a founding member. He was sentenced to 212 years after a twenty month trial. What is most telling is the normality of DeKock, as argued by experts at the sentencing stage of his trial, in October 1996. Marlene Burger writes: "One might have expected the evidence to show that he was a seriously disturbed man. Instead, psychological evaluations show that DeKock, 46, ... shows none of the characteristics typical of criminals." A picture of Eugene de Kock in a v-neck sweater and sunglasses is captioned "TYPICAL MAN ... Eugene de Kock fits the second most common profile of South African men."

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One Law for One Nation

It is undeniable that criminal activities were the modus operandi of the previous regime, itself declared illegitimate by the world. Even Francois van der Merwe, the attorney for former security policemen involved in the abductions and killings of Steve Biko, the Pebco Three (Port Elizabeth Boycott Committee) and the Cradock Four, conceded that these incidents were "within the culture of the government of the day." Dirk Coetzee, former security officer responsible for the murder of Griffiths Mxenge and a commander of the notorious Vlakplass, described the "special protection" he enjoyed during his tenure in the Security Branch of the SAP (1977-1981) as enabling him and his colleagues "to operate above the laws of the country and above the rules and regulations of the police ..."

The slogan, "One Law for One Nation," was the centerpiece of newspaper advertisements for the new Constitution prior to its passage in May 1996. It could also have been appropriately used to advertise the opening of the Commission's hearings in East London in April 1996.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Objectives

Under the aim to "promote national unity and reconciliation in a spirit of understanding which transcends the conflicts and divisions of the past", the Commission's objectives are to (1) establish as complete a picture as possible of gross human rights violations perpetrated between 1960-1994 by conducting investigations and hearings; (2) facilitate granting of amnesty in exchange for full disclosure of truth for acts with a political objective within guidelines of the Act; (3) make known the fate of victims and restore their human and civil dignity, and allow them to give accounts and recommend reparations; (4) make a report of findings and recommendations to prevent future human rights violations.

The application of the Act's amnesty provisions to an "act, omission or offence ... associated with a political objective committed in the course of the conflicts of the past" to both

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sides—the liberation movements and the apartheid state—encapsulates both its compromise origins and its significance as a step toward the establishment of the rule of law. The question is whether the neutral, impartial process of the Commission, non-discretionary in its statutory application, can reflect the historical truth that the struggle for one nation, one law was an internationally recognized legitimate struggle for self-determination and liberation against an illegitimate, pariah state.

This challenge is posited in the context of an Act replete with contradictions—in its goals, subject matter, means and remedies. How can the goals of national unity and reconciliation address the issues of individual redress, especially with a mandate to establish a picture of the system of apartheid through investigations and hearings on individual human rights violations? How can the complicity of other state apparati—the media, judiciary, education, health, business—be acknowledged and made part of compensation to victims? Will victims within South Africa and in the front-line countries be individually or collectively restored? Are truth and justice in opposition in this process, or can the possibility of amnesty and threat of criminal prosecution be used tactically in tandem for both the state's interest and those of victims? And finally, and perhaps most fundamentally, is the process of reconciliation between victim and perpetrator a private, individual matter or are reconciliation and reparations steps toward leveling the economic playing field and challenging the existing, glaring disparities in wealth and the relations of power?

While these considerations have been germane to most of the sixteen truth commissions to date, South Africa's emphasis on transparency distinguishes it approach from many of its international predecessors. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (i) is implemented by a government committed to human rights and a party, the ANC, who established four commissions in 1984, 1989, 1992 and 1993 to investigate allegations of its own internal abuses; (ii) has broad investigative powers, including subpoena power; (iii) is mandated by statute to deal with an inclusive range of human rights abuses and to name names of perpetrators;

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(iv) conducts public hearings; (v) has a long two-year life span, ending in December 1997.

The Commission, chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and co-chaired by Dr. Alex Boraine consists of 17 commissioners, who are divided into three committees: Human Rights Violations, Amnesty and Rehabilitation, and Reparations. Its central office is located in Capetown, with regional offices in Johannesburg, East London, Durban and Capetown. Hearings began in April 1996 in East London. As of March 1997, close to 10,000 people made statements to the Commission and more than fifty Human Rights Violations hearings were held in townships throughout the country. As of May 10, 1997, the cut-off date for amnesty applications, approximately 8 thousand applications had been received. Special hearings on the Bisho Massacre, Gugeletu 7, Trojan Horse, Langa Massacre, Women, Youth and Children, Role of the Health Sector During Apartheid, Political Party Submissions, South African Defense Force (SADF) and South African National Defense Force (SANDF) have been held. Other hearings, focusing on the Media, Judiciary, Business, and the State Security Council are scheduled.

Hearings: Public Acknowledgment of Apartheid's Past

As many have observed, the mostly black South African audience, suffering themselves again with the witnesses as they testify to heinous violations, at times weeping, already know what has happened to their friends and families. But hearings give people the opportunity to assert actively their human right to be treated with dignity by the state. The term "victims," popularized especially by the media, is historically inaccurate. As one listens to witness after witness recount their stories, especially of physical violations calculated to break their will to survive and resist, it becomes immediately apparent that these people are more than survivors: they are heroes and heroines, ordinary people responsible for the success to date of the liberation movements. I especially remember listening at Paarl in October 1996 to Patric Qumza, severely assaulted and detained in 1986 by the South African Police after having been injured in a political feud between the UDF and AZAPO-AZANYU, alleg-

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edly supported by police. He successfully pretended he was a corpse in order to survive. His statement, prepared prior to the hearings, is a half page in length. He testified for thirty minutes in minute detail about the events of a decade ago.

Significantly, the human rights violations hearings have taken place throughout the country in townships and communities in which the abuses have occurred and where victims and their families live. The Trojan Horse Event Hearings in May 1997 were held at the Athlone Technical College, bordering Thornton Road in the colored township of Athlone outside Capetown. Less than a few blocks away on October 15, 1985, police officers in civilian garb had jumped out of unmarked crates on the back of a South African Transport Services flatbed truck on a narrow residential street full of schoolchildren and opened fire on them for allegedly throwing stones. Two children, Michael Miranda and Shaun Magmoed, aged 11 and 16 years respectively were killed in the road and a third, Jonathan Claasen, aged 21 years, was killed by shotgun fire in a nearby house and countless others were injured. Seven police officers involved in this incident had been subpoenaed by the Commission to testify at the hearings, filled with hundreds of family members, friends, community and local schoolchildren, some of whom had not even been born when the incident occurred. Stonefaced and unremorseful, they had feared for their safety and claimed their intent was to arrest the stone-throwers. But, as pointed out by a twelve year old student at Habibia Primary School in neighboring Rylands who was attending the hearing and viewed a TV video of the incident made in 1985, there were no vans in which to put children who would have been arrested. The police testified they were equipped with No. 1 and AAA ammunition, which, when fired at close range, could kill. None of the police applied for amnesty. The human rights violations hearings share the element of "speaking bitterness" described by William Hinton in *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chines Village*, when women gathered to talk about oppression under the old regime. In fact, a nationwide victims' support group, prominent in

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making victims an integral part of the Commission process is called Khulumani (isiZulu for "speak out") Support Group.

The Right to Know: Personalizing the Perpetrators

When the nineteen-year-old daughter of murdered anti-apartheid activist, Sicelo Mhlawuli, one of the Cradock Four, came forward out of the audience in the City Hall at the opening Commission hearings in East London, April 1996, she appealed to the commissioners, "We want to forgive, but we don't know who to forgive." Identifying perpetrators—putting names with the descriptions of clothing, physical attributes, demeanor, brutalities and obscenities of the state's footsoldiers—is one of the Commission's key tasks.

The Commission is succeeding in not allowing apartheid to remain a nameless and faceless system. It challenges the position that no one was responsible for apartheid. When Constitutional Court Justice Albie Sachs was questioned about difficulties former agents of apartheid had in dealing with new laws and relationships with the ANC-dominated government, his answer was brief: "No difficulty. [They say] I was not involved in apartheid." There is not so much a denial of apartheid's systemic existence or revisionist efforts to erase it (although important paper proof and documentation of especially the security apparatus has been destroyed) but a denial of an individual's role and responsibility in the apartheid regime.

This denial pattern was F. W. de Klerk's justification for his ignorance of acts that occurred during his tenure, including allegations of state involvement with Third Force violence, which according to the Steyn Report he failed to investigate. De Klerk made great efforts to distance himself from the apartheid policies of his predecessor, P. W. Botha, who—according to former police commissioner Johan van der Merwe testifying at amnesty hearings in October 1996 in Johanesburg—ordered then Law and Order minister Adriaan Vlok to have Khotso House [headquarters of the South African Council of Churches and site of anti-apartheid meetings] bombed in 1988. Shirley Gunn, then an underground ANC MK operative, was sought by the state for the bombing and detained and

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tortured in 1990. Since the revelations by van der Merwe eight years later, the TRC received, as of January 30, 1997, ten amnesty applications relating to this bombing. In June 1997, Vlok agreed to testify at a special truth commission hearing on the State Security Council (SSC), the country's real government during the 1980's, composed of the most senior Cabinet Ministers and top military brass of the security forces. The SSC's imprimatur is all over the CCB terror squads, Vlakplaas police murder squads, the terrorist Hammer Unit, the Directorate for Covert Collection and other overt and covert counterinsurgency operations of the Total Onslaught.

The importance of laying bare and piecing together the inner workings of the apartheid system in minute detail is one of the Commission's most important tasks. It is raised by victims at the amnesty hearings: it is not good enough for a security officer to say he attacked so-and-so because he was a suspected terrorist; victims want to know, in detail, why that officer suspected these things, under what conditions and on what day. On the one hand, this is part of the accurate recording of history, but more importantly, it is the reclaiming of history by victims. By understanding what was done and why, the events suddenly no longer remain in the control of the apartheid state; they become part of the property and history of those who previously were violated in these events.

The right to know is particularly significant in the context of the secrecy and censorship that dominated South Africa, dating at least from the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 to President F. W. de Klerk's opening address to Parliament on February 2, 1990. The state security apparatus in particular required secrecy as a condition of its existence. In the situation in South Africa, the most effective human right may well be the right to information. This access is codified in the new South African Constitution: Everyone has the right to access to any information held by the state; and any information that is held by another person and *is required for the exercise or protection of any rights* (my italics).

But exercising this right to know, especially by those most directly affected, sometimes is a tortuous process. At the

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Gugeletu 7 event hearing in Capetown in November 1996, the mothers of the slain young men almost collapsed with grief as they watched for the first time a police video of their sons' murders ten years ago. One of the commissioners, questioning a mother, commented, "it is difficult and it hurts us to watch you writhe in pain." It is evident that the Commission, through its work and particularly hearings, has unleashed publicly a huge force of emotion that previously had been the private agonies of individuals and their communities. Whether this will encourage the process of forging a common history for the South African nation is yet unclear; in the absence of more white people coming forward there is a danger the Commission will be seen only as a platform for black people, as a *different forum in which to relive the horrors of the past.*

Removal of the Privilege of Not Knowing

For the majority of South Africans, the Commission is allowing them to exercise their right to know who violated them and under whose orders. For the white minority, the Commission has removed the privilege of *not* knowing. Apartheid with its culture of censorship, secrecy and suppression is under public scrutiny, nightly on television in front of a whole nation. Commission activities highlight the evening news, with filmed excerpts from hearing testimony and a weekly forty-five-minute review. They are the topic of radio talk shows, including Radio Zulu's weekly report to more than a million listeners. They are in the headlines in every daily and Sunday paper. Although some non-governmental organizations have criticized the Commission for opting for mass media coverage in lieu of more community-oriented civic-education campaigns, it is undeniable that today in South Africa it is a conscious act not to know of the Commission's activities.

Why did so few whites "know" and, especially "liberal" whites? And why did whites "refuse to know," when they were given information by other whites? Architects versus foot-soldiers of apartheid is vociferously debated. But if human rights abuses are to be prevented in the future, the question of how a minority in power was able to convince or induce

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their fellow white citizens to execute apartheid in the specific ways they did needs to be addressed. The bestiality of deKock was not a horrific exception; it was an accepted norm within the culture of the government of the day. And that culture was not confined to those in government office.

Reconciliation from One Side Only?

During its first six months, the holding of mostly human rights violations hearings and only one or two amnesty hearings made it appear that reconciliation was one-sided, i.e., victim sided. Witness after witness was asked why s/he was testifying and wasn't it because s/he wanted to be reconciled? This focus omitted the other half of the equation, the perpetrators, and it personified forgiveness as an individual action. The danger was that victims of apartheid were now being asked to bear the burden of reconciliation as well. A generosity of spirit has been evident. Witnesses make very constrained requests of the Commission. Etched in my memory is Mrs. Nombuyiselo Mhlawuli, widow of Sicelo Mhlawuli, one of the Cradock 4, abducted and murdered by the police. She asked for his hand (seen by someone in a bottle in the Port Elizabeth police station) to be returned. Others ask for proper burials for loved ones, scholarships for children left without parents, a tombstone, death certificates ... humble, modest requests in proportion to the violations inflicted and suffered.

Starting with the testimony of five former security officers at the Johannesburg amnesty hearings in October 1996 and still continuing, there has been an attempt to rectify the "imbalance" as revelations about security operations, implicating P. W. Botha and F. W. de Klerk have been revealed. As evidence of governmental involvement in human rights abuses mounted, the National Party ("NP") increasingly attacked the TRC for "one-sidedness." In the NP's Second Submission to the TRC in March 1997 de Klerk proclaimed that apartheid was not a crime against humanity and was incomparable to genocide. He warned that acceptance of this comparison as a prerequisite for reconciliation (as some in the ANC were urging) was "a sure recipe for the rekindling of inter-racial

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animosity." Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who had personally presented evidence to de Klerk of human rights abuses, was saddened by de Klerk's consistent denial of knowledge of security operations during his tenure as President from 1990 to 1994 and while he served as a member of the State Security Council (where, by his own admission to the TRC in May 1997 he attended 91 percent of the meetings) in the 1980s. According to the Human Rights Committee, as a result of political violence, including hit squad, vigilante and destabilization activities, there were 14,000 deaths (double the number of deaths in the preceding forty years) and 22,000 injuries in the period 1990 to the elections in 1994. Even when confronted with evidence from a State Security Council document produced at the hearing calling for the elimination of opponents of the state, de Klerk rejected the notion that pre-1994 governments ordered the murder of anti-apartheid activists. With evidence of this personal knowledge, Commission Deputy Chairman Alex Boraine had asked de Klerk if he had weighed the possibility of applying for amnesty. The NP's continued attacks on the "partiality" of the TRC then peaked in demands for the resignation of Dr. Boraine and an apology from chairperson Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The NP commenced legal action against the TRC when its demands were rejected.

As pointed out in the *Saturday Star, Independent On-Line*, June 14, 1997, Nelson Mandela never personally knew what went on in the ANC camps. But upon his release from jail, Mandela ordered the Motsuenyane Commission to investigate allegations of abuse and misconduct in the ANC camps and, as leader of the party, accepted full responsibility.

As interpreted by some news analysts, de Klerk was appealing to conservatives in the NP. His testimony occurred exactly one week after de Klerk disbanded a task team headed by party secretary-general Roelf Meyer, a key negotiator of the settlement, that was investigating the formation of a new political movement intended to include a grouping of opponents of the ANC. De Klerk claimed his only difference with Meyer was one of timing. The task team had advocated a commitment to disband the NP without a similar commitment

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from the other potential party partners. But couched in this procedural issue are fundamental differences about the apartheid baggage of the NP and visions of what is required to function in a new South Africa, including the future alignments for the 1999 elections.

Meyer announced his resignation from the NP the weekend of May 17 and 18. I saw him four days later and asked for his business card. He replied that he was "in transition." As of June 1997, two NP representatives at provincial level have quit and joined his New Movement Process (NMP), and dozens of resignations have come from other NP officials, councillors and youth representatives. The list of defectors is likely to increase. It seems that de Klerk's NP, as Minister of Justice Dullah Omar has suggested, is in crisis, not the TRC.

Amnesty

Attending the Truth and Reconciliation Commission human rights violation hearings confirms that they are achieving the goal of becoming the "facility for the oppressed [to] enable them, should they so choose, to fulfill a civic sacrament of forgiving." But of yet greater import for the future are the amnesty hearings where the relations of power between victims and perpetrators are challenged as perpetrators are cross examined by victims' families, as information about the chain of command of the executioners and organization of the system is forced out, and as the majority of South Africans can finally know the details of the perfidy of the apartheid state.

The drafters of the Act were confronted with the challenge of how to make the amnesty provisions work for the victims in the face of a settlement in which the criminals retained both their weapons and their social and economic power. In the words of Professor Medard Rwelamira, one of the Act's drafters, "Reconciliation cannot occur in a situation of wanton amnesty which totally disregards victims."

The Interim Constitution's (1993) Post-amble, "National Unity and Reconciliation," states that "amnesty shall be granted in respect of acts, omissions and offences with political objectives and committed in the course of the conflicts of the past"

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and it provides for mechanisms, criteria and procedures to be defined by Parliament. According to the Act implementing this provision, amnesty shall be granted if, in short, it is with respect to an act associated with a political objective committed in the course of the conflicts of the past and if the applicant has made a full disclosure of relevant facts. It covers acts of both the State and the various liberation organizations. It does not cover offenses committed for personal gain (excluding the pay of state agents) or out of personal malice.

The task was to balance the latitude of an open-ended concept of amnesty with specific limiting criteria, so that while any conflict and everybody could come into the process, it was not a blanket amnesty without standards. For this purpose the Act adopts the principles defining the concept of a political offense drafted by Carl Aage Norgaard, a Danish national and president of the European Commission on Human Rights, for use in the 1989 settlement in Namibia that foreshadowed events in South Africa. These principles require an examination of the: (1) motivation of offender; (2) circumstances; (3) nature of the political objective; (4) legal and factual nature of the offense; (5) object (state vs. private entity); and (6) relationship between the offense and the political objective, its directness or proximity or proportionality.

The proportionality criterion, perhaps more than the others, offers discretionary latitude to the amnesty committee and it is the criterion that the National Party singled out in its criticism that the Norgaard principles limited the constitutional rights bestowed by the Constitution. It is the criterion, for example, that is to be applied in acts of gruesome, wanton violence grossly disproportionate to their aims. How this is applied in the cases of the convicted killers of Chris Hani, Clive Derby-Lewis and Janusz Walus, may prove the litmus test of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The proportionality criterion may also, in the end, rectify the Act's "balance" between the apartheid state and the liberation movement. The ANC did not have a policy of killing civilians. In contrast, former Vlakplaas commander SAP Brigadier Jack Cronje revealed at the Johannesburg amnesty hear-

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ings on October 22, 1996, for the first time the existence of a top secret counter revolutionary information target center: which identified and prioritized anti-apartheid activists to be "intimidated" or "eliminated" known as TREWITS. Cabinet minutes from the discussion about quelling the Soweto Rebellion in 1976, released by the State Archives, reveal that Jimmy Kruger, then Minister of Justice, Police and Prisons said that "Police should perhaps act a bit more drastically and harshly to bring about more deaths." A supplementary indictment filed in the trial of former Defense Minister Magnus Malan and 19 others indicated that 1988 duty sheets issued to SAP officers directed that "offensive actions'" (for which read hit squad activities) had to be authorized in advance by Military Intelligence and targets had to be approved by military officers and the police's security branch.

But the proportionality criterion has not quelled criticism of the amnesty provisions from the victims of the apartheid regime. Major challenges to the Act, most notably by the families of Steve Biko, Advocates Griffith and Victoria Mxenge, Dr. and Mrs. Ribiero and the Azanian Peoples Organization (AZAPO), focus on the provisions of the Act providing civil and criminal immunity for perpetrators granted amnesty. They argue that they are thereby deprived of their constitutional rights "to have justiciable disputes settled by a court of law or, where appropriate, another independent and impartial forum." In addition, they contend their rights under international law were violated based on the declaration of apartheid as a crime against humanity and the status of combatants given to participants in the wars of national liberation recognized under Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions 1977.

The Constitutional Court decision in July 1996 ruled against the families, on the grounds that the Constitution (Section 33) sanctioned the right of limitation to access to the court, based on the Post-amble to the Constitution granting amnesty. It also held that the amnesty provisions were not inconsistent with international norms and did not breach South Africa's obligations in terms of public international law

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instruments, relying on the distinction between conflicts between parties within the same state (as in South Africa) versus for example, conflicts between a colonial power and a struggle for self-determination against colonial and alien domination of their countries. "The erstwhile adversaries of such a conflict inhabit the same sovereign territory. They have to live with each other and work with each other and state concern is best equipped to determine what measures may be most conducive for the facilitation of such reconciliation and reconstruction."

Although the Constitutional Court has ruled in *Azapo et. al.*, the arguments are very much alive, and of this the Commission is aware. In *Azapo et. al.*, there was a broad representation of the liberation movements in the plaintiffs' political affiliations: Azapo, PAC and ANC. The issues raised transcend party lines: in the quest for justice, are the needs and objectives of the state synonymous with those of the violated individuals? Particularly in the example of a state governed by a former liberation movement and plaintiffs who were all leading activists in those movements, where do interests intersect? To what extent are these plaintiffs expressing the sentiments of the masses, and which sectors of the masses?

Amnesty is not punishment for wrongs, either to individuals or a society. It is a political remedy at a national level, to begin to reconcile and rebuild a divided society. How the truth extracted from perpetrators can provide a foundation on which to reconstruct a new, democratic South Africa cannot yet be fully known. But what can now be known is that South Africa has courageously undertaken a process that has insured that the past will not be buried.

That reconciliation involves forgiveness and occurs at the level of individuals cannot be denied. As an individual matter, forgiveness may or may not happen; this is very much dependent on the perspectives of the victim and other influences, particularly religion. The process of reconciliation, as pointed out by the Deputy Chairperson of the Commission Dr. Alex Boraine and others, must be linked to economic justice. The material conditions of the majority of people, the

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victims of apartheid, must change for national unity and reconciliation to be achieved.

NOTES

1. From a letter of Commission Chairperson Archbishop Desmond Tutu to *The Sunday Times* (of South Africa), December 4, 1996, "the Commission remains a risky and delicate business, but it remains the only alternative to Nuremberg on the one hand and amnesia on the other."

   For a complete set of notes including the sources of all quotations, etc., contact *Monthly Review*.

(Continued from inside back cover)

thousands of workers have been laid off and the trade surplus has soared, with imports stagnant and many goods exported because they could not be sold domestically.

What confronts the mainland's mandarins is a fundamental change in the economy and the means they must use to regulate it. An economy of shortage has become an economy of surplus.... The mandarins are now confronted by a new set of problems which their state planning textbooks have not equiped them for—huge overcapacity of production and flows of billions of yuan in private and company accounts over which they have limited control.... Official figures show that by the end of 1996 production of 93 percent of goods was in surplus or adequate with inventories reaching 540 billion yuan (about $501.98 billion dollars) up from 460 billion yuan a year earlier and far above reasonable levels. By 1995 two thirds of the production capacity of industrial goods was underutilized.

"At the start of this year everyone was expecting the start of a new economic cycle, with low inflation, two cuts in interest rates and a booming stock market," the *Economic Daily* said on Friday, "But this has not happened. There are even signs of contraction, such as rising stock levels and higher losses of companies. What this means is serious imbalances in our economy which is hampering its development."

What all this seems to add up to is that at least for the short run China is more of a deflationary than inflationary force in the global economy.

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THE MANY LIVES OF MERIDEL LE SUEUR (1900-1996)

by ALAN WALD

A copy of Walt Whitman's writings at her bedside, the life-long socialist fiction writer, poet, and journalist, Meridel Le Sueur, died on November 14, 1996, at the age of ninety-six. Her literary persona, however, will live on into the next century as the site for contested interpretations, retrospectively inscribed, of the relation of female Marxist cultural workers to the organized Left in the mid-twentieth century. The Communist Party's *People's Weekly World* published an obituary noting that Le Sueur remained a Party member to the end, testimony to an unbroken allegiance of more than seven decades. (The claim was based on a February 1995 interview where, in reply to "the question," the bed-ridden Le Sueur quipped: "Prone, but still in!"[1]) In contrast, *The New York Times* obituary made no mention of any Communist or Marxist inclinations, describing Le Sueur as one "who reported on the plight of the poor during the Depression and celebrated the free spirits of early Americans in her fiction for children...."[2] *The Nation* mentioned Le Sueur only as having a negative relation to the Communist Party, based on the dubious allegation that it tried to "censor her output" for "her writings about women and

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children and the close inspection of their lives." *The Nation* writer acknowledged that Le Sueur was hounded by the FBI and blacklisted, especially in the McCarthy era, but this was only "because of her radical connections with the Industrial Workers of the World, the Populists and Farmers Alliance."[3] Beyond these, the bulk of appreciations of Le Sueur appearing to date consists of memoirs by other aspiring writers who were individually touched by her unflagging devotion to the working class, her continuing literary vitality, and her personal accessibility.[4]

Le Sueur inaugurated her writing career in the mid-1920s as a radical Bohemian with deep roots in the Midwest, although she had already traveled to both coasts. In the East, just after First World War, she studied at the American Academy of Dramatic Art and acted on the New York stage, rooming with anarchist Emma Goldman in a commune. In the West, from 1922 to 1928, she unsuccessfully pursued a career in film (as an extra and stunt woman for *Perils of Pauline* and other movies), acting and radio (as the voice of Betty Crocker). She joined the Communist Party in 1924 or 1925 (no documents exist, and her responses to interviewers varied), and in 1926 married labor organizer Harry Rice. Under the influence of two Midwestern fiction writers, Zona Gale (1874-1938) and Margery Latimer (1899-1932), and with the aid of the former, Le Sueur launched her literary career by publishing an allegorical story called "Persephone" in the May 1927 issue of *The Dial*.[5] That same year, while in jail for a demonstration protesting the execution of anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti, she decided to have a child. She soon moved to Minneapolis where two daughters, Rachel and Deborah, were born in 1928 and 1930. More stories appeared in *American Mercury*, *Pagany*, *Scribner's*, *Fantasy*, *The Magazine*, *Windsor Quarterly*, and similar places.

Her early work seems most strongly influenced by D. H. Lawrence through an emphasis on male "rational" and female "emotional" natures, with heterosexual intercourse being a transformative experience for the female through the agency of a virile male.[6] However, Le Sueur also hailed from a left-

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wing family. Her parents taught at the People's College in Fort Scott, Kansas, and introduced their daughter to Eugene Debs, John Reed, Helen Keller, Theodore Dreiser, Carl Sandburg, Margaret Sanger, and others. This heterogeneous radicalism shaped her consciousness in the 1920s, although she often referred back to troubling memories of her grandmother's fanatical convictions against sex and alcohol.

Prior to the Great Depression, Le Sueur's contributions to the Communist movement were mainly through the *Daily Worker* and *New Masses*. In the early 1930s she reaffirmed her Party commitment more strongly. In her noted essay, "I Was Marching," printed in the September 18, 1934 issue of the *New Masses*, she depicted her conversion to communism as that of a middle-class intellectual resolving her isolation through active support of the Minneapolis Teamster Strikes.[7] A year later, in "The Fetish of Being Outside," she trounced wavering poet Horace Gregory in the same publication for suggesting that, although he had been procommunist since the 1920s, he did not feel that Party membership would advance his art.[8] Her statement is often noted for its emphasis on the Communist movement's providing "communal sensibility" as an alternative to decadent, bourgeois individualism; this was due more to the Party's organic roots in the working class struggle than specific ideological positions.[9]

By the mid-1930s, Le Sueur was making a distinct contribution to Marxist cultural theory as a passionate advocate of midwestern literary realism. Her speech to the 1935 American Writers Congress—she was the only woman to present a main address—is an argument for revolutionary regionalism as an authentic people's culture.[10] Her own writings are consecrated to such goals, and are also marked by a premature "socialist-feminism" (the term didn't become widespread until the 1970s) never explicitly acknowledged at the time. Alexander Trachtenberg, head of the Party's International Publishers, performed a memorable service for American culture when he issued *Salute to Spring*, a collection of her short fiction and reportage, in 1940.

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Le Sueur continued to write with modest success during the 1940s, including the publication of the regional history *North Star Country* (1945). During the height of the Cold War, however, she could justifiably assume the mantle of the blacklisted cultural martyr, harassed by the FBI and betrayed by comrades. For years she held menial jobs, raising her two daughters virtually on her own. During this nadir of her national reputation, her work could be found mainly in the pages of the Party's redoubtable *Masses & Mainstream.* However, the Blue Heron Press, established by Marxist historical novelist Howard Fast after he was released from prison only to find himself blacklisted, issued her book about her parents, *The Crusaders* (1955). She also launched a new phase in her career by writing half-a-dozen volumes of children's literature, most of which are still in print.[11]

Le Sueur's career was renewed as a result of the radicalization of the 1960s. Small press editions of her stories and poems began to appear, such as *Corn Village* (Sauk City, Wisconsin: Stanton and Lee, 1970) and *Rites of Ancient Ripening* (Minneapolis, Vanilla Press, 1975). Then, through the heroic efforts of West End Press, the editor of which was friendly to the communist cultural movement, *The Girl*, a startling novel of the 1930s, was assembled from various manuscripts and published in 1978. Employing the forms, themes and techniques of popular crime stories to advocate proletarian feminist solidarity, *The Girl* became one of the most frequently discussed texts of radical women's literature in the next decade and went through several editions. In the same period, West End brought out *Harvest* (1977), *Song for My Time* (1977), and *Women on the Breadlines* (1977). After the Feminist Press publication of *Ripening* (1982), which was widely reviewed, Le Sueur was hailed as an icon of feminism, celebrated for her devotion to working class women and strong feelings for nature and Native American culture. For many veterans of the 1960s, Le Sueur stood as living proof that a modern left-wing women's culture existed much earlier and in more complex ways than previously acknowledged.

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With the growing interest in the history of the Old Left that occurred in the 1980s, it was inevitable that Le Sueur's associations with the communist movement would eventually be debated by women scholars seeking foremothers in the radical tradition. In 1990, Constance Coiner published an essay, "Literature of Resistance: The Intersection of Feminism and the Communist Left in Meridel Le Sueur and Tillie Olsen," later incorporated in more modulated form into her book *Better Red: The Writing and Resistance of Tillie Olsen and Meridel Le Sueur* (New York: Oxford, 1995).[12] Here Coiner somewhat schematically counterpoised the two women writers, in their focus on women's experience, to both a "transcendent Party" (one run by male bureaucrats) and an orthodox Marxism based on a "primacy of production" theory that treated women's work as marginal.[13]

A year later, Paula Rabinowitz issued a pathbreaking genre study, *Labor and Desire: Women's Revolutionary Fiction in Depression America* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), arguing that Le Sueur "consciously constructs a narrative of working class female subjectivity by feminizing the proletarian novel."[14] Rabinowitz's original contribution was less a negative indictment of masculinist Communist cultural policy than it was a positive reclamation of the unique contribution of left-wing women's fiction; in their novels, radical women presented gender and sexuality as sites for constructing political subjects, paralleling what Party theory had already accomplished in regard to race and class.[15] More specifically, Rabinowitz demonstrates that the experiences in *The Girl* of "prostitution, male violence, illegal abortion, forced sterilization, childbirth, and heterosexual intercourse become the focal moments that forge consciousness, in much the same way as industrial accidents, speedups, company goons, and sellout unions do for the masculine proletarian" in other texts of the 1930s.[16] Rabinowitz concludes that the manuscript was rejected in the Depression era "because it broke conventions, only to resurface as a feminist classic in the late 1970s for precisely the same reasons."[17]

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Next came Barbara Foley's *Radical Representations: Politics and Form in U.S. Proletarian Fiction, 1929-1941* (Durham, North Carolina; Duke University Press, 1993), which agreed with Rabinowitz that in *The Girl* Le Sueur broached an "essentialist" outlook. The novel equates motherhood with revolutionism and "'invokes women's biological capacity to bear children without interrogating the cultural platitudes surrounding motherhood.'"[18] Nevertheless, Foley lumps Rabinowitz with Coiner in contradistinction to her own argument that such departures from the conventions of Party-led radical literature are not to be seen as alternatives to or subversions of Party canons, but merely express a fuller apprehension of gender issues.

Two years later, Laura Hapke, in *Daughters of the Great Depression: Women, Work and Fiction in the American 1930s* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1995), supported Coiner's view that Le Sueur was split between an analysis of class and male oppression, with the result that there are two voices in her work: "[Le Sueur's] fiction alternates between an 'official' party voice and an 'unofficial' critique of masculine conduct on the home front." Yet Hapke concludes of Le Sueur as well as Olsen that, "as party loyalists elevating collectivism over individualism and unwilling to transform feminist insight into dissent, they ultimately retreated from the implications of their revisionist position."[19]

Most recently, Nora Ruth Roberts' *Three Radical Women Writers: Class and Gender in Meridel Le Sueur, Tillie Olsen, and Josephine Herbst* (New York: Garland, 1996) shifts the discussion away from a Party-versus-woman focus to concentrate on the functions of the literature itself. To Roberts, the importance of *The Girl* stems from its profound yoking together of a "sense of communality and connectedness not only with the feminine reproductive experience but with the life cycle, the proletariat, and the communist utopia."[20] Presenting an overview of patterns, Roberts finds that, in the 1930s, her three protagonists (Le Sueur, Olsen, and Herbst) addressed the relation of gender to class along a continuum of possibilities.

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Then, following the Second World War, all three devoted special emphasis to nature and nature writing.

These literary studies of Le Sueur in the 1990s are a welcome, clarifying advance over the earlier ones that hesitated to seriously confront her life as a communist, a political identity of which she was proud. What is especially helpful to socialist activists is that the new readings, even though they sometimes exaggerate points of disagreement, explicitly or implicitly express a range of attitudes on the part of the scholars that are relevant to thinking about the issue of the participation of women in class-based socialist organizations. This is an especially problematic issue in the 1990s, when the left is in organizational disarray and when left parties as well as the whole concept of "class" are frequently coded as masculine domains. What is challenging about Le Sueur is that she consistently addresses feminist concerns while never relinquishing Party commitment.

Moreover, according to a 1988 essay by Linda Ray Pratt precisely on that matter, "Woman Writer in the CP: The Case of Meridel Le Sueur," these two facets of Le Sueur are connected in more complex ways than earlier, more simplistic oppositions of gender and class (or Party) could explain. Pratt's thesis is that "CP involvement may have been a crucial support to Le Sueur's survival as a woman writer even as it has had a dampening influence on her lyrical portrayals of women."[21] She commences her case by observing that, although contemporary feminists and others repeatedly point to Le Sueur's brief association with people like Emma Goldman, her more substantial political influences were Communists William Z. Foster, Robert Minor, and Clarence Hathaway. Le Sueur also served at times in Party leadership capacities; for example, as an alternate member of the National Executive Committee of the Communist Political Association (the organization launched when the Party temporarily dissolved during the Second World War) and as chair of the Minnesota-Dakotas District of the Communist Party.

Pratt specifically addresses Le Sueur's oft-quoted recollection that some Party members criticized her work for

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being too lyrical. Here Pratt provides documentation that Le Sueur herself appreciated that criticism and thought it justified. Although Pratt prefers the more lyrical texts, Le Sueur in her last decades repudiated her own early use of "beautiful language" and the "mysticism and vagueness" that she felt obscured her writing as late as 1939.[22] Moreover, Pratt observes that claims about Le Sueur's "feminism" need to be tempered by a recognition that her anti-male literary portraits are always of non-Party members; when Party males appear, they "help female characters recognize their true identity as members of the communal group."[23] Such a literary strategy enabled a reconciliation, on a broad plane, of her feminist views with her communist ones.

In sum, Pratt believes that the influence of the Communist Party encouraged Le Sueur's nonlyrical and, therefore, stylistically weakest writing. Yet she concludes that it was also the Party that gave Le Sueur the most prophetic and enduring feature of her artistic achievement. This was a sense of women's collective power, and her vision of solidarity among women, which Le Sueur derived from the communists' view of solidarity among workers.

Situating Le Sueur's relation to the communist cultural legacy, as well as to Party organization, is by no means the sole issue in assessing her stature as an artist. She was intellectually and emotionally formed by earlier events, and her literary life ranged far beyond the list of books brought out by International Publishers. (When I spent an evening with her in 1989, she enthusiastically recommended to me the writings of Marxist-humanist Raya Dunayevskaya, and spoke with admiration of the Trotskyist Dunne Brothers in Minneapolis, attributing to them the central political role that her own writings on Minneapolis had elided.) Yet the relation of the cultural worker—male and female, Euro-American and of color, middle class and working class—to the organized left remains the site of considerable concern as we reach century's end with few viable alternatives to the traditional methods of organized struggle. The committed artist is one who recreates and expresses the utopian impulses of humanity and the socialist movement; thus de-

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bates over the cultural worker's need for freedom as well as discipline, individual expression combined with collective action, telescope many issues of concern to a broader layer of activists. As attested by the recent spate of books treating Le Sueur, the life and work of this authentic socialist cultural worker lives on to inspire and instruct the new generation of socialist militants. And that's precisely what she intended. Salud, Meridel.

NOTES

1. *People's Weekly World*, 21 December 1996, p. 20.
2. *The New York Times*, 24 November 1996, p. 21.
3. *The Nation*, 17 February 1997, p. 34.
4. See the valuable collection of materials in *People's Culture*, New Series #34 (1996).
5. This is reprinted in *Ripening* (New York: Feminist Press, 1982), pp. 76-84.
6. The most helpful discussion of this phase of Le Sueur's writing is still Elaine Hedges' "Introduction" to *Ripening*, pp. 1-28.
7. "I Was Marching" has been reprinted in *Ripening*, pp. 158-165.
8. "The Fetish of Being Outside," *New Masses*, 26 February 1935, pp. 22-23.
9. See Constance Coiner, *Better Red* (New York: Oxford, 1995), p. 94.
10. This has been reprinted as "Proletarian Literature and the Middle West," *Harvest Song: Collected Essays and Stories* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: West End Press, 1990), pp. 204-7.
11. Alfred Knopf, the New York publisher with left-wing sympathies, brought out more than half of these: *Chanticleer of Wilderness Road: A Story of Davy Crockett* (1951); *Little Brother of the Wilderness: The Story of Johnny Appleseed* (1947); *Nancy Hanks of Wilderness Road* (1949); *The River Road: A Story of Abraham Lincoln* (1954); and *Sparrow Hawk* (1950).
12. The essay appears in Lennard J. Davis and M. Bella Mirabella, *Left Politics and the Literary Profession* (New York: Columbia Univesity Press, 1990), pp. 162-185. While many of the same points are made in *Better Red*, some qualifications were added and additional points interpolated that indicate a far less monolithic understanding of the male leadership of the Communist cultural movement.
13. *Better Red*, pp. 181, 182.
14. *Labor and Desire*, p. 99.
15. Ibid., p. 62. Four years earlier, Rabinowitz's introduction to the acclaimed collection she edited with Charlotte Nekola, *Writing Red: An Anthology of American Women Writers, 1930-1940* (New York: Feminist Press, 1987), gave sharper emphasis to the oppressive features of the predominant gender ideology on the cultural Left.
16. Ibid., p. 115.
17. Ibid., p. 115.
18. Rabinowitz as quoted by Foley, *Radical Representations*, pp. 239-40.
19. Hapke, *Daughters of the Great Depression*, p. 95.
20. Roberts, *Three Radical Women Writers*, p. 69.
21. Linda Ray Pratt, "Woman Writer in the CP," *Women's Studies* 14, 3 (February 1988): 247.
22. Pratt, p. 257.
23. Pratt, p. 258.

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INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIALIST SELF-MANAGEMENT

by ANDY POLLACK

Belief in the possibility of socialism has waned as the so-called socialist countries have reverted to capitalism and as capital has once again expanded the scope and depth of its rule. Yet a self-managed, democratic socialist society has never been more possible. The material possibility of socialism, as reckoned in the sheer productivity of industry and the availability of masses of goods and services, has existed for most of this century. Now the technical basis for the process of managing those things, i.e. for the process of socialism, has taken huge leaps forward with the advances in information technology of just the last few years.

At the very same time that the postcapitalist bureaucracies were falling, computing innovations were being developed that could put to rest skepticism about purely technical barriers to democratic planning. Just as the socialist countries were rushing back toward capitalism, the explosion in size and use of the Internet—and more generally of Information Technology (IT—was providing the technical (and in part the organizational) basis for a truly self-managed economy. Tens

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of thousands of grassroots social movement organizations around the world can contact each other through the Internet, as can businesses, government and research organizations with their massive databases and economic modelling tools. Were there to be a revolution in any country in the world tomorrow, the possibility for an immediate transition to democratic and efficient planning using the Internet would put to rest the claims about the unfeasibility of a socialist economy. (for further reading on the potential of information technology for democratic planning, including concrete estimates of times required to carry out various decision making tasks using existing computers, see W. Paul Cockshott and Allin Cottrell, *Towards a New Socialism* (Nottingham: Spokesman, 1993).

Use of IT for self-management assumes, of course, that those things about which IT would store and analyze information would be in the hands of workers, not capital. Information technology is simply a tool for administering power, not a way of seizing it. Media hype about the information age and the way IT can provide a friction-free, democratic capitalism, ignores how and why IT is developed and applied today: as a tool to find new ways of extracting surplus value in an economy still centered on the production of material, not virtual, goods and services. A down-to-earth understanding of the use of IT in todays political economy is a prerequisite for a level-headed picture of how we might get to a self-managed society, which will not come through the click of a mouse but through the tramping of millions of feet, the raising of millions of hands, the use of billions of voices to seize the factories, the mines, the offices—and the computer.

I. Speed, Size, and Access

Alec Nove claimed that in a modern economy, in which every day trillions of goods are produced and traded by billions of people, only the market can make the necessary calculations, through its pricing and supply-and-demand mechanisms. Yet every week come new reports of increases in size and speed for products at all ends of the computing

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spectrum. The supercomputers used by Wall Street, the Pentagon and major university research institutions long ago reached a level sufficient to run the millions of simultaneous equations that would have to be solved to plan a modern socialist economy. What's more, parallel processing and client/server arrays are qualitatively increasing computing capabilities and at the same time shrinking the size and expense of the hardware on which ever more complex calculations are performed.

The power of parallel processing received wide publicity during the 1995 chess match between Gary Karpov and IBM's Deep Blue. This machine, like others of its ilk, is normally used to predict the behavior of complex systems such as weather changes, ecological shifts, and other systems that are more complex than any economy. Some of these supercomputers and parallel processing apparati are already accessible through the Internet. Now government, academia and business have teamed up to build Internet II: a separate and even faster network (which will eventually be available to the general public as well).

Last November the Cray Research Unit of Silicon Graphics introduced a supercomputer able to perform a trillion calculations a second. A project once taking three months, boasts its inventors, could be done in a few days. Not long after, the Intel Corporation and U.S. Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary announced development of another computer that could "perform an astounding 1 trillion calculations a second. That smashes the previous mark of 368 billion calculations a second held by Japan's Hitachi Corp. By comparison, it would take every man, woman and child in the United States 125 years, working nonstop with hand-held calculators, to perform 1 trillion calculations. It's an astonishing achievement," O'Leary gushed over the machine, which was built by connecting 7,264 Pentium microchips of the type found in ordinary home computers. "We have this ultra-computer growing from really desktop microchips," she added. And O'Leary said that if the machine were Santa Claus it could deliver gifts to everyone in America in less than the time it takes to blink.

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The new supercomputer will be reserved for use by scientists working on highly rarefied projects. Intel officials said it will give scientists a tool to simulate everything from nuclear explosions to DNA strands. "It's a baby step toward being able to do a real simulation of the physical world," said Justin Rattner, a chief developer of the project. And, says *The Daily News*: Intel had better look out: IBM is building an even faster supercomputer, capable of 3 trillion operations a second.

O'Leary's Santa Claus analogy may have been tongue-in-cheek, but in fact it reflects accurately the relevance for planning of this new generation of computers. The Santa Claus analogy itself is used in economic theory to model far more complex distributional models. Massively parallel computers can solve in seconds problems involving thousands of carriers with millions of destinations. Such computers—with accurate information provided by grassroots councils—could solve any of the distributional bottlenecks said to make socialist planning impossible.

Another alleged barrier to socialist planning is the impossibility of keeping track of sufficiently large numbers, of housing in accessible form the sheer quantity of information produced by an economy with millions of producers and consumers and billions of discrete goods and services. Here too IT has already provided the potential to solve this problem.

IBM plans to put two million patent filings on the World Wide Web, thus proving, said an IBM spokesperson, that very large data bases can be placed on the Internet and shared by large numbers of people. The company may also put FEC filings on the Web so the public can more easily follow campaign contributions made to politicians, as well as other still unspecified large data bases.

Far bigger databases—those in the financial and commercial sectors—are already accessible on the Web (see below). Now new proposals are being made to universalize access to the Internet that carries them. Although the Net, and computer use in general, is still highly stratified, households online are expected to go from 23.4 million in 1996 to more than 66

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million in 2000. One fifth of the 25 million people in the United States between 18 and 24 years old are already online, and over the next five years the figure is expected to double.

The public library system in New York City has over 500 computers with Internet access, and in all these libraries there is computerized access to national and world trade databanks, census data on CD-ROMs, etc.

In the computer classes I teach, I've gotten a feel both for the expanding access of workers to computers through their unions and the even greater access enjoyed by their kids both at school and at home. Even the lab with the most primitive computers (i.e., DOS-based 286s) has been used by students to do spreadsheet calculations on job loss in their industry (healthcare) and to write essays on the managed care revolution. At my other employer, BMCC, a 90 percent Black and Latino working class college, there are several labs, with hundreds of computers, many of them online.

Already in most working-class communities there are computers on the street which are tapped into every day by the majority of workers: that is, on the one hand, the ATMs which connect workers to their banks, and on the other, the Lotto and Off-Track Betting machines where workers place their bets (and lose their money). Here we see an apparatus which could be used by workers, in a different kind of society, to record on an everyday basis consumption requests, to register their desires to shift jobs, to vote on production and consumption proposals, etc.

Today junior high school students argue via e-mail with university astronomers about the projected impact of a meteorite hitting Jupiter, and use the mathematical capabilities of the astronomers' computers to bolster their arguments. Every Sunday each New York daily paper lists new Websites for interactive discussion; weekly alternative magazines report every week on new electronic chat groups. Each of these are potential sites for decentralized discussion of socialist planning—discussions which, as the junior high school example shows, need not be limited to typing in opinions, but can involve actual exchange of data.

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II. Networks: Gateways to Participation

a) Within the firm: Intranets

The potential for self-management within an individual economic unit can be seen by the spread of intranets, that is, internal company networks. Most firms today have or are setting up intranets on which employees can electronically send data, correspondence, charts, and even video images to each other. This has led to a lot of hooey in the business press about the potential for new styles of horizontal management—a potential, however, which could be realized under a different system. Technologies now used to monitor and intensify work, to increase the rate of exploitation and profit, could be used for very different purposes.

Fifteen years ago a coworker at Warner & Swasey, a machine-tool manufacturer in Cleveland, showed me how workers could use computers to see for themselves the productivity of their labor and its contribution to the firm's profits. Workers put data into shop-floor terminals about the number of the parts they machined, the time it took, which department it went to next, etc. The computer then calculated workers bonuses, as well as overall plant production. This coworker used one of these terminals to show me how we were being exploited, demonstrating the difference between what we got in wages and bonuses per piece, and what the company got from each piece as part of the total sales price of the finished machine. That is, he demonstrated to me the theory of surplus value using the company's computer.

The Evil Computer Empire, Microsoft, sells an array of programs sufficient to perform most of the computing tasks that would be necessary for grassroots economic decision-making within a given economic unit: e.g., Team Manager, Project, Access, Excel, Word and Publisher. Team Manager and Project, perhaps the most important for the decision-making process, enable scheduling and allocation of resources, and constant revision of each. Access is a database, which stores and analyzes relationships between workers, invento-

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ries, suppliers and customers. Excel is used to perform calculations about production and pay. Word and Publisher can be used for memos, newsletters, resolutions, etc.

And the hottest program on the corporate IT market today—SAP/R3, made in Germany—links the database and spreadsheet functions of such programs in a massive multidimensional format, connecting departments in giant firms in qualitatively new ways.

One of the hottest spheres of competition in the software industry is the attempt to link intranets, groupware, and the Internet in new ways. Microsoft's strategy switch in the last year from desktop PC software to networking software came partly from a desire to cash in on the consumer rush to the Internet, but even more so from a desire to consolidate its lead in the corporate networking field, first by advancing the dominance of its Windows NT software (for corporate intranets), and secondly by beginning to link that software to Internet programs. Netscape in turn, reacting to Microsoft's assault on the browser field, moved to enter the market for groupware, which also meant taking on IBM's Lotus division. Netscape execs point to studies projecting that the intranet market will grow to $10 billion by 2000.

Groupware allows collaboration on documents, and thus the sharing of information within a company, as well as the forging of links to customers and suppliers. Groupware is increasingly being designed to work with push software which automatically retrieves and updates data from the Internet. Information finds you, rather than you finding information says Netscape's president.

IT developed for internal company use could be used in a self-managed society by workers of a given firm to plan the mix and number of products or services; to plan work schedules and hiring; and to analyze how to equitably divide the surplus they produce between their own needs and those of society as a whole.

The increased linkage of intranets with the Internet prefigures linkages possible between self-managed economic units—which leads us to innovations in interfirm networking.

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b) Planning Across Firms

The use of computers for ongoing recalculations has become part of the management mania for just-in-time decisionmaking, to better recalculate flows to and from suppliers and consumers. WalMart boasts that its computer system allows it to minimize inventory, managing its shelf space to match quickly changing consumer needs. Auto manufacturers use similar systems to tighten their connections with parts suppliers and car dealers. FedEx's Business Link lets shippers build their own Websites to advertise their goods. Customers can then place orders and tell FedEx to have them delivered, all online, through FedExs Internet links. FedEx executives boast that they are providing a wide range of integrated information, transportation and logistics help, including order entry and confirmation, inventory management, invoicing and service for returns or repairs. One FedEx VP said the move solves one of the key limitations of electronic commerce by linking the automated order and fulfillment system to the delivery of the product to the end customer.

Now imagine these computers turned over to consumer councils, who would use them to tally the direct registering of consumer desires that have been input into ATMs and home PCs—and keep track of how those desires are fulfilled at the point of purchase; the councils could then pass on these figures to production units.

What's more, all of this can be done on an ongoing, real-time basis. That is, we're not talking about ballpark estimates of consumer needs based on a hypothetical basket of goods: were talking about the direct input of billions of expressed desires and the constant recalculation of production and distribution requirements that flow from them.

I could see the possibility of such constant recalculation when I was a reservation agent at Pan Am. The company's computerized reservations system was used to readjust the number of flights, and their schedules, based on consumers projected use. The system recalculated constantly fare levels as it tallied how reservations on each flight

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were changing the likelihood that it would end up being sold out, thus allowing managers to decide when to end sale prices, to readjust them from among the different sale types, or to add more discounts if sales were slow. Such ongoing changes are a perfect example of the meshing of technical and organizational spheres in the performance of iterative decision-making. (And even at that time many passengers were making their own reservations online).

Advances in this sphere of IT has led to a trend away from reliance on internal computer departments and management information systems in favor of using outside firms. The technology used by the latter could be used just as well by socialist economic units to develop joint plans. Ross Perot, founder of EDS, first made his fortune by convincing California to let him handle the databases of its government agencies; now firms like his are bidding to manage the records of states welfare rolls as they move to comply with the new Federal welfare repeal law. The company with the largest revenue stream in the United States—GE—draws almost as much revenue from such information management services as it does from its traditional manufacturing base.

Imagine if these companies were taken over and turned into centers for socialist accounting, to coordinate interfirm production, to keep track of and vote on shifts in social service levels, and to decide on changing mixes of services provided by public bodies.

Imagine such programs used by elected planning committees to recalculate continually what they send to and receive from other workplaces and communities. Figures on deliveries of goods and services between units would be checked by members of interunit councils; such figures would lead to updating of decisions on product mixes and amounts, and thus on social priorities. And the savings from decreased distribution cost and time would lead—again, through discussion based on hard data—to further shortening of worktime and/or its reallocation to unsolved social problems.

Federal and state departments of labor have long had computer displays of available jobs, and have recently begun

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listing available jobs online. The computers at New York's Worker Career Centers—union-funded employment and retraining centers—could be linked to Department of Labor databases, transforming them from job searching centers for hundreds of dislocated, i.e. laidoff, workers, into centers of self-management where the working class as a whole meets to calculate hours worked in each industry, how to redistribute work, and thus how to shorten the workweek.

This April, the AFL-CIO posted a site on the Web in which users can compare their annual income to that of their company's CEO; the program then calculates how many years the worker would have to work to equal the exec's annual salary. What is now a propaganda exercise could just as easily be turned into a tool to redistribute amounts of both labor contributed and its fruits.

c) Cybershopping: Self-management in Consumption

The technology and organizational linkages necessary for democratic planning of consumption and reproduction needs have also taken huge steps forward in the last few years.

During the 1996 Christmas shopping season the media were full of features on the new cybermalls, as retailers put their goods on the Web. In 1996, 3 million households spent over $1 billion on purchases online, double the 1995 amount.

These cybermalls could be used by consumers to enter estimates of their consumption needs. Computers that previously registered orders—and projected firms future sales—could now tally the results of consumers' expressed preferences for various goods, and those results could be disseminated to the relevant industries. The latter would then have estimates on which to base their output, estimates which could be continually revised both by individual consumers and by consumers acting through their councils.

d) Economywide Planning

There are already many examples on the Net of macroeconomic analysis and planning tools used by the big stock exchanges, by multinational corporations, and by academia and

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government. On the exchanges, computers register ongoing changes in the prices of stocks and commodities for tens of thousands of firms, and anyone with Internet access can already view the workings of the exchanges on their PC. Every day in its business pages the *Daily News* reminds its readers that it offers free, up to the minute stock quotes and info on its web site, including earnings, revenue, and high-low pricing.

At least one organization already provides an online embryonic example of how interactive planning might work. The Economic Democracy Information Network (EDIN) homepage has an interactive form allowing users to see how changing spending for various government agencies affects the federal deficit. The user tells the computer by what percentage she wants to change the expenditure of various government departments, and taxes from various social classes; the computer then tells her how much the Federal deficit would grow or shrink. She can then e-mail her comments on the process to other participants.

The University of Marylands Inforum network provides Web access to a set of macroeconomic modelling tools—input-output tables, linear programming, etc.—that socialists long ago claimed could be used to run a planned economy. For almost twenty five years, it boasts, Inforum's EconData program has provided answers to such questions as: what effect will reduced military spending have on the airline industry? what would six percent growth in the money supply mean for the lumber industry? how would the U.S. chemical industry be affected by a decline in the dollar? and what impact would sweeping changes in tax laws have on employment in various industries?

These questions are answered with the help of input-output tables (first developed by Wassily Leontieff), which portray the flows of goods and services through the whole U.S. economy. Such tables let you see how changes in one industry's production levels affect the others; and to see how these interactions in turn add to GNP, profits, government revenue, consumption, etc. Input-output tables can be constructed for any given length of time, a month, a year, or ten years.

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The databases in EconData include a variety of economy-wide statistics compiled by local, state and Federal governments, as well as the IMF and World Bank. The types of questions that Inforum provides to its business clients using this data are just the sort that would be confronted by worker- and community-planners. Imagine if an expanded version of EDIN's interactive game were linked to models like Inforums, which in turn had real data funneled to it on a continuous basis from an expropriated stock exchange computer system.

Inforum already provides a program to allow users to perform complex mathematical tasks themselves—with only limited knowledge of the math involved. Its PDG Program, an econometric regression and model-building program for PCs, allows the user to build and use data banks, with thousands of regularly updated economic time series, and perform a whole series of complex mathematical tasks. The United States has millions of working class students taking accounting, business and economics courses in college—students who already have far more than the rudimentary knowledge of math and economics needed to use the PDG Program.

Millions of workers have already had experience with spreadsheets, which work on similar, if more rudimentary, principles as input-output tables. It was in fact the ability to handle personal finances and small corporate budgets that first made the personal computer a mass commodity. Millions of households of all classes have already used VisiCalc, Lotus, Excel, Quicken, and other programs to keep track of their personal finances in table form. These spreadsheet programs are the same ones used by the biggest investment banks to do analysis and reports based on the figures generated by the more massive database programs, such as SAP/R3, Essbase and Oracle.

In a self-managed society such IT could be used for continual mass participation in national and even international planning. And the planning process could be broadcast live over WebTV, allowing individual and council input in realtime into the decisionmaking process. Mainstream IT pundits boast of the potential of broadcasting innovations to

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allow electronic democracy in today's society. Such claims have rightly brought forth left critiques that these pundits are not talking about real participation, but at best about mass spectacles with plebiscite-type referendum, allowing elite manipulation. In the context of very different social property relations, could IT instead provide genuine, structured linkages between decisionmakers at different levels of society to guarantee socialist democracy?. Can we use IT to make lower-level units more than passive producers of data for higher-level decisionmakers?

III. IT and Macro-Micro Linkages

Advocates of socialist self-management have always stressed the need for a careful articulation of decision-making, that is, deciding on what level decisions need to be taken, and pushing as many decisions as possible down the chain. Decisions shouldn't be made on a national level that could be made locally; decisions shouldn't be made by industrywide or regional bodies when they could be handled by workers in a particular workplace or residents in a particular neighborhood.

The open nature of the new IT, the range of ways to connect users, and the possibility of discussion groups linking up to databases all make possible the disaggregation of data to the appropriate level, and in fact make possible ongoing discussion and voting on how to disaggregate the data, and how to decide at what level things need to be decided. A democratic socialism must include a process to counterpose different planning models, so workers could assess their relative merits in terms of access to decision making, decentralization of decisions, and inclusion of an adequate variety of social concerns at each level (i.e. transforming of gender and nationality issues into quantitative forms, etc.).

The real mathematical difficulty in planning socialism is not the tallying of data or the calculation of huge numbers of simultaneous equations, but a method to link such data and calculations with concrete micro- and middle-level organizational decisions, which then would have to flow back into the macrolevel, i.e. the iterative decisionmaking process de-

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scribed by Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel in *Looking Forward: Participatory Economics for the Twenty First Century* (Boston: South End Press, 1991). The IT used by brokerage houses—and even more so by the online programs allowing individuals to bypass the brokers and interact directly with the stock and commodites markets—are one example of a technology which could handle such a process.

Millions of mutual fund investors already have Internet access, and 32 percent of them have already visited the Web sites of financial service companies. Entrepreneurs are using the latest IT to find ways for the small investor to get access to markets previously open only to the big houses, for instance offering after-hours trading online, a privilege previously reserved for securities firms. A reflection of the new importance of such interactive services is Dow Jones's recent embarrassing admission that its online services needed massive overhauling—and its subsequent alliance with Microsoft to do the job.

The current run of the stock market through successively higher landmarks—however artificial these landmarks may eventually prove to be—have been facilitated in a technical sense by the proliferation of the brokerage houses, the mutual funds into which they steer investors—and the IT they use. These changes were dramatized by the recent merger of Morgan Stanley and Dean Witter-Discover, expected to be a precursor of similar big investor-small investor marriages. Billions of dollars have poured into mutual funds by middle- and working-class investors (and by their pension and medical funds). The firms that manage these funds by necessity have IT that make connections between the databases of national and international exchanges, of huge state pension and health benefit systems, and of millions of individual investors. Their IT must therefore provide linkages across the full range of economic levels, from the individual to the macroeconomic.

It is just such linkages that could be used by midrange workers' councils to ensure an active flow of information across levels of a self-managed society, to keep track of how micro and macrolevel decisions are affecting each other. Under socialism each brokerage house's computer network could be

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turned over to a regionwide or industrywide council, which could in turn be connected to PCs in homes, union halls, etc.

The stock markets and commodities exchanges themselves could be transformed from gigantic betting pools into measuring devices of real production and consumption changes—changes that could be constantly monitored on millions of PCs, both individually at home, and in council offices using the brokerage house apparatus described above. Decisions made at a national level, and registered through a socialized Big Board, could be disaggregated through the brokerage house IT apparatus into databases appropriate for the kind of decisions which smaller units would need to make.

The New York Stock Exchange announced last December that its ticker would be televised live, each trade being shown on a televised Big Board seconds after being made. Imagine if this ticker registered not private stock prices but numbers of children's shirts sewn, the number of fresh tomatoes brought to market, etc., etc.

Other examples of the already existing potential for macroeconomic computerized planning come from Washington, where the Federal government is shifting its benefit payments to direct deposit, replacing checks with a form of electronic banking (the government currently makes 850 million individual payments a year totalling $1.2 trillion; electronic direct deposits already account for 53 percent of those transactions). Large companies already file around 155 million tax forms electronically. Computer systems capable of handling such massive payments from and to the overwhelming majority of U.S. residents could become a core component of a socialist distribution network.

"Push" software, which got its fifteen minutes of fame earlier this year, is a crass means of forcing advertising onto consumers' screens, designed by corporations to try to overcome the anarchy of information on the structureless Web. It could instead be used by socialist planners to more efficiently disseminate information feedback among councils; programs could be written so that periodically data is pushed to eco-

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nomic units that are approaching preset levels expected to require recalculation of previously entered decisions.

IV. Electronic Cash and Socialist Accounting

In 1996, 9.7 billion transactions were recorded at 122.7 million ATM machines in the United States. Banking transactions from home are swelling, as Citibank and others encourage PC users to go online with their accounts. The national clearinghouses that centralize the accounts of banks, stock exchanges and other financial institutions move trillions of dollars a day electronically.

Just in the last year, Chase Manhattan, AT&T, Dean Witter-Discover and three other companies announced plans to create a new electronic cash network for U.S. consumers. Several companies are developing software to load cash onto plastic cards through ATMs, over telephones, and soon via the Internet. These cards could be used to make purchases from merchants who have smart-card-reading terminals.

This entire apparatus could be a backup system for socialist accounting. We already register on a continual basis the economic transactions of hundreds of millions of people. A self-managed society could use electronic cash, and the computers that record its use, to track the accuracy of the decisions made with all the apparatus described in previous sections of this article. The shadow prices used in postcapitalist societies to gauge the accuracy of bureaucratic planning decisions could find a more concrete manifestation in electronically-generated figures of real economic activity.

V. International Planning

There's no lack of statistics today summarizing worldwide production, reproduction, health, education, etc. International agencies such as the UN, the ILO, the World Bank and the IMF, do so all the time. Last November the ILO reported its estimate that one billion people worldwide—30 percent of the worlds labor force—were either unemployed or underemployed in 1995 (less drastic levels from 1993 and 1994, were said to represent crisis levels not seen since the

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Great Depression). As part of the run-up to last year's Beijing conference, the U.N. published global estimates of the billions of dollars in unpaid labor contributed by women around the world, showing that women are doing unpaid work equivalent in size to the formal world GNP. Another, more ghastly global estimate of women's status, was made by Amartya Sen when he demonstrated that gender and economic inequities had led to the existence of 100 million fewer women than should be alive today. Leontieff, of input-output table fame, himself did a study for the UN using international tables showing how decreases in military spending and restructuring of income and development inequities would reduce poverty in particular countries and on a global scale. All such databases, tables, statistics and econometric calculations could become part of a democratic international planning process. However overrated the current wave of globalization is, there is no question that the international reach of Information Technology is a brand new phenomenon. Yet, in the existing society, the IT sector simply mirrors the unequal international division of labor inherent in the newest stage of imperialism. The Internet's mainstream boosters claim its international character will further the spread of riches and freedom in this "new" era of globalization. But computer hardware (and more recently software) production and assembly is disproportionately concentrated in low-wage neocolonial regions; data input is shifted away from the developed world to the Third World (and to impoverished regions in the First) for the same reason.

Such disparities in where IT is produced and its data input, as opposed to where its profits flow, is built into the political and economic nature of our system. But the spread of the technology itself shows the potential to redistribute its location and use once society itself is revolutionized. International grassroots electronic planning to overcome underdevelopment is now technically feasible on a global scale.

VI. IT and the Sphere of Reproduction

I recently read a manual on business networking techniques which argues that those middle-layer workers made

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redundant by the Net could find employment as social workers or child care workers. It's far more likely that the savings accrued from their firing will end up in the bank accounts of their bosses (and in the accounts of computer moguls). A social reassessment of priorities, a shifting of resources from manufacturing to services, as part of a restructuring of gender power and roles, could however be facilitated by the use of IT under socialism.

The Web, while deluged with advertising from manufacturing and retail firms, also houses homepages from agencies and organizations in the sphere of reproduction. A quick browse with a search engine turns up such sites as the Childcare Administrator, Administrator Software for Windows (designed to meet the needs of childcare centers), American Childcare Solutions, and the Federal government's National Childcare Information Center. There's even a websearcher devoted specifically to childcare, the Childcare National Network Gopher. These groups allow users to swap information on types of childcare available, resources and research on childcare, pending legislation, etc.

A socialist accounting system could turn these Web sites into places for parents and children to register their needs on a societywide basis, and to integrate those needs with the production and consumption figures from other sectors of the economy.

In some ways this could be the most fundamental change of all. A self-managed society using IT could prove with hard numbers that the socialist and feminist revolutions can be an indivisible whole.

VII. Who Will Control Information Technology?

Despite the relative newness of the Internet, one can already see several examples of how capital is frustrating its inherent potential. The Internet, and IT more generally, has an openness that drives the corporate world crazy, as they scramble to find ways to secure their business secrets and yet still be able to take advantage of the networks openness to boost their marketing potential. Thus the fear of the Net's free

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flow of information, and the mania to develop software to maintain corporate secrecy.

Communications industry mergers, already happening at a feverish pace, were given a new boost by the recently concluded global telecommunications pact. The expected increases in size and power of these IT titans will further weaken those who would seek to maintain the open, indeed anarchic, nature of the Internet.

What's more, the new Information Technology, being touted as leading to a leaner and more productive capitalism, will in the long run lead to a system every bit as wasteful as the precomputer version. The net savings to individual firms, and to the economy as a whole, will not be turned toward increased *production of goods or services, or to redistribution of income*, but will sink in the hole of capitalist anarchy. The reduced turnover time of capital accruing from implementation of IT will in the long run simply deepen the severity of downturns and depressions.

The implementation of IT, its full use, and the purposes for which it is used, thus bring us back to the question of power, and which social groups wield it. The U.S. left has done far too little during this century to explain how the massive organizational and technological apparatus of existing society could be used in a different way. No other country has produced so many economists, accountants, statisticians, marketing researchers, management-information-systems analysts, reporters, etc.—in sum, professionals whose job is to plan the affairs of their firm or agency. No country has held so many meetings and conferences, arranged and rearranged complex corporate structure, or produced so many publications, to plan business affairs. The left has done a fairly good job of exposing the waste in our system, but we've done far too little to show how the social infrastructure of today provides potential conduits for information flows in a more democratic society, or to show workers who are using those technologies today the possibilities they have for the future.

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BOOKS

By John Bellamy Foster

William I. Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, U.S. Intervention, and Hegemony* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 466 pp., $59.95 (cloth). $22.95 (paper).

Neoliberalism is usually thought of as a purely economic philosophy, stemming from the work of the arch-conservative economist Friedrich Hayek and other twentieth century economists (particularly those associated with the University of Chicago), and involving an attempt to construct a much more complete justification for a pure, self-regulating market economy than could be found in the work of Adam Smith himself. Yet, neoliberalism—it is important to understand—also has its political component in the dominant model of liberal democracy, termed "polyarchy" by one of its leading proponents, Robert Dahl.

The first systematic presentation of this neoliberal or free market model of democracy emanated from the pen of another Austrian economist and social theorist, Joseph Schumpeter, who had emigrated to the United States in the early 1930s to teach at Harvard. It was Schumpeter who first challenged "classical" conceptions of democracy, arguing that democracy should not be conceived as government of/by/for the people (as it had been from time immemorial), or as a means to the end of the development of the individual (as in John Stuart Mill), but should be seen as a method of political organization akin to that of the market

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within the economic realm, involving political entrepreneurship, competition for scarce votes, and generally passive consumers. In this view the general population had no relation to democracy other than the one of voting periodically for politicians competing for elected office. "Democracy," Schumpeter wrote, "means only that the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them."[1] Indeed, Schumpeter stipulated that one of the preconditions for the exercise of the democratic method was that politicians be free from interference from the population in between elections. Another precondition was that the power of government be limited so that it could not easily intervene into the realm of the economic marketplace.

Schumpeter looked around and said in effect that classic notions of democracy did not describe extant democracies in Europe or the United States. The concept of democracy should therefore be redefined, he argued, to bring it into line with the institutional characteristics of actually existing democracies. Democracy should be cleansed of outdated moral considerations and defined purely in institutional or procedural terms, focusing on form rather than substantive content. In this spirit he offered his well-known definition that "the role of the people is to produce a government, ... the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote."[2]

Subsequent pluralist thinkers were to expand this into a full-fledged model of polyarchy, or a concept of actually existing democracy, understood as an institutional form that mirrored the economic marketplace. Although Schumpeter, with his characteristic realism, had conceded that the political outcomes of such a system very seldom reflected the actual interests of voters—but were affected by the "manufacturing" of consent through the mass media in a manner similar to the role of advertising in the market—later thinkers like Robert Dahl and Anthony Downs were to insist that the genuine preferences of voters were accurately reflected in the results, which produced a kind of political equilibrium between the demand and supply for political elites not unlike the economic equilibrium of the marketplace.[3]

At the time Schumpeter was writing, democracy was still commonly viewed as consisting of both means and ends/form and content. Schumpeter boldly attacked such complex views of de-

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mocracy, arguing that democratic method was logically consistent with social injustice and the annihilation of human rights—the "persecution of Christians, the burning of witches and the slaughtering of Jews"—and that, in such cases, even the most ardent democrat would be forced to put other ideals above mere democracy.[4] Democracy could not be considered an end it itself, it followed, but was merely a political method that was to be supported insofar as it was deemed useful in serving other ends, such as social justice, individual freedoms, decent government, etc.

Adopting an elitist view that hearkened back to the work of such earlier proponents of "the theory of democratic elitism" as Alexis de Tocqueville and Gaetano Mosca Schumpeter indicated that the greatest danger to democracy was "the rabble" with its "criminality or stupidity," and that the democratic method was useful primarily if it were so curtailed that such extremes, which made democracy as an end in itself rather than simply a method, were restrained by the development of more limiting democratic institutions.[5]

It is only in the context of this elitist, neoliberal conception of democracy that one can understand the response of mainstream political scientists to the popular rebellions of the 1960s and early '70s. This is best illustrated by the well-known Trilateral Commission report on the "Governability of Democracies," entitled *The Crisis of Democracy* (1975), co-authored by Michel Crozier, Samuel P. Huntington, and Joji Watanuki. As Huntington, who authored the report's discussion of political conditions in the United States, put it, the main threat to democracy was "an excess of democracy" in the sense of the growth of mass movements that pose "the danger of overloading the political system with demands which extend its functions and undermine its authority." The "crisis of democracy" for these thinkers was thus a crisis of elitist, neoliberal democracy, leading Huntington to the conclusion that democracy can be undermined through "overindulgence"; that "there are potentially desirable limits to the indefinite extension of political democracy."[6]

It was not just popular democratic ferment in the most advanced capitalist states of Western Europe and the United States that induced Huntington and his co-authors to decry "an excess of democracy," but also developments on the periphery and semi-periphery of the system, most notably the election of a socialist government in Chile, and the emergence of mass-based revolutionary movements in Portugal in Southern Europe in the context of

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the short-lived Portuguese revolution. However by the 1990s—if Huntington is to be believed—the specter of "an excess of democracy" had been vanquished both practically and theoretically. As he states in *The Third Wave* (1991): "For some time after World War II a debate went on between those determined, in the classic vein, to define democracy by source or purpose, and the growing number of theorists adhering to a procedural concept of democracy in the Schumpeterian mode. By the 1970s, the debate was over, and Schumpeter had won."[7]

What took place between the 1970s and the early 1990s that caused Huntington, a proponent of democratic elitism, to shift from despair to triumphalism? The answer is to be found—in very detailed form—in William Robinson's indispensable work, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, U.S. Intervention and Hegemony*, recently published by Cambridge University Press. Robinson is the author previously of a number of works on U.S. intervention in Central America. In his most recent study however he has moved to issues on a broader canvas, exploring what Huntington has called "the third wave" of "democratization" (that is the rise of neoliberal democracy) in the 1980s and '90s in countries such as the Philippines, Chile, Nicaragua and Haiti. What Robinson's study conclusively demonstrates is that capital's promotion of neoliberal economic restructuring in recent decades, in response both to economic stagnation and to popular uprisings, has had its counterpart in the neoliberal promotion of polyarchy, a policy carefully articulated and implemented by the U.S. imperial state with the goal of reinforcing the global hegemony of the capitalist class based in the rich nations.

Robinson does not himself use the terms "neoliberal democracy" or "free market democracy" to define this phenomenon (terms introduced by the present author), but relies on other terms such as "regimented democracy," "low intensity democracy" or simply "polyarchy"—terms that have cropped up in various ways within the neoliberal literature itself. The use of liberal democracy in one form or another as a means of staving off popular insurgency is not new, but has occurred repeatedly during the last two centuries. But the story Robinson tells is of the growth of a more sophisticated conception among political elites and the U.S. foreign policy establishment of ways in which "low intensity democracy" could be used to obtain the consent of the governed while excluding more "excessive" or high intensity forms of democracy. As Michel Crozier

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had written in the Trilateral Commission report on The Crisis of Democracy, the object was to use polyarchic institutions in preference to more authoritarian forms of government in order to "produce more social control with less coercive pressure," in accordance with the view of Mosca and others that limited democracy was a better means of social regimentation and elite control than authoritarian rule.[8]

For Robinson, what has distinguished the 1970s, '80s and '90s in the political realm was what might be called the "Italianization" of political theory and practice (particularly within the international realm) as described by such critics as Stephen Gill and Robert Cox (both of whom have played leading roles in bringing Gramscian notions of hegemony into international relations theory).[9] Italian political theorists, representing viewpoints stretching from fascism to communism, have long been noteworthy for their recognition of the importance of civil society and of the consensual basis of politics. In the case of right-wing theorists such as Pareto, Michels and Mosca, a central theme in their works was that of determining the means of maintaining elite dominance over society.[10] For Gramsci, on the left, the goal was to challenge bourgeois cultural hegemony. This emphasis on the consensual basis of politics was most highly developed in the work of Gramsci. Fundamental to his analysis was the notion of extended state, in the sense that the "State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armor of coercion." Hegemony, which itself stood for the possibility of political rule based on the consent of the governed backed up by coercion, could only be secure if rooted in institutions of civil society: "the ensemble of organizations commonly called 'private.'" Gramsci's analysis thus led to the conception of an "extended state," encompassing civil society as well, by means of which the hegemony of a given ruling class was secured. At the same time, Gramsci pointed to a theory of counter-hegemony, whereby a revolutionary class might challenge the hegemonic ruling class by means of a long march through civil society.[11]

When "a crisis of authority" is spoken of, Gramsci contended, what is really at issue is a crisis of ruling class hegemony, rooted in the dissension of "the broad masses" and groups of intellectuals, sometimes raising the question of revolution.[12] After the release of the Trilateral Commission report, U.S. elites began to deal with what they saw as the crisis of authority and threat of unregimented democracy abroad by engaging systematically in "democracy pro-

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motion" policies. As Howard Wiarda, a leading proponent of "democracy promotion," put it in 1990: "the democracy agenda enables us ... to merge and fudge over some issues that would otherwise be troublesome. It helps bridge the gap between our fundamental geopolitical and strategic interests ... and our need to clothe those security concerns in moralistic language ... The democracy agenda, in short, is a kind of legitimacy cover for our more basic strategic objectives" (quoted in Robinson, p. 73). One of the earliest advocates of the deliberate promotion of polyarchy as a means of stabalizing third world governments was William A. Douglas, whose ideas were influential in inducing the U.S. National Security Council (NSC) to create the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). In his work, *Developing Democracy* (1972) Douglas introduced the term "regimented democracy" to refer to the type of regime that the United States should promote in the third world. The populations in third world countries, Douglas argued in traditional imperialist language, were children who needed "tutelage." "That a firm hand is needed," he wrote, "is undeniable.... Democracy can provide a sufficient degree of regimentation, if it can build up the mass organizations needed to reach the bulk of the people on a daily basis. Dictatorship has no monopoly on the tutelage principle" (quoted in Robinson, p. 84). His recommendations on "transplanting" democracy to the third world, as Robinson explains, included "the establishment of a specialized agency (later to become the NED); the participation of the private sector ... in government-supervised 'democracy promotion' abroad; and the modification of existing government institutions and programs so as to synchronize overall foreign policy with 'political development'" (p. 85). Douglas went on to become a senior consultant to the NSC's Project Democracy, which resulted in the establishment of the NED and other U.S. state organs devoted to promoting polyarchy as a political counterpart to neoliberal economic restructuring.

Political manipulation, and "political aid," have long been aspects of U.S. foreign policy and a key part of its interventionist strategy. Up through the Vietnam War period, however, these activities fell under the jurisdiction of the CIA. As Robinson explains, "The new, post-Vietnam breed of political professionals lobbied for the transfer of crucial aspects of the CIA's political operations—namely 'political aid'—to a new agency"—one that would use sophisticated electoral techniques, political aid, and

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other political operations to achieve its results. The result was to be the National Endowment for Democracy, introduced by the Reagan administration in 1983. The NED was set up by the NSC as part of the same Project Democracy that included (as its covert arm) Oliver North's secret operations that were to lead to the Iran-Contra scandal. According to *The New York Times*, these were "'the open and secret parts' of Project Democracy, 'born as twins' in 1982 with NSDD 77 [National Security Decision Directive 77]" (Robinson, p. 92). Although the NED is frequently described as an "independent," "private," or "nongovernmental" organization, it is funded entirely by Congress with funds channeled through the Department of State. And even though it is presented as a vehicle for public diplomacy, the NED frequently engages in covert activities.

The NED is only the best known of a number of U.S. government agencies that have been given responsibility for "democracy promotion." Another was the Office of Democratic Initiatives (ODI) established by the State Department in 1984. "In the division of labor, the NED conducted such overtly political activities as 'party-building,' whereas the ODI managed government-to-government 'democracy enhancement' programs, such as sponsoring judicial system reforms, training legislators of national parliaments, and financing electoral tribunals in intervened countries" (p. 98). NED works closely with various intermediaries or what are known as the "NED core groups." These include the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the National Republican Institute for International Affairs (NRI—now the International Republican Institute, or IRI)—the international wings of the Democratic and Republican parties; the Center for International Private Enterprise (an extension of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce); and the Free Trade Union Institute (FTUI), an international branch of the AFL-CIO. The blurring of public and private within the NED core group is reflected in the nongovernmental organization (NGO) front that these organizations exhibit, despite the fact that they are vehicles of U.S. foreign policy. It is then possible to present such activities of "democracy promotion" as the product of organizations outside the sphere of the U.S. government. As former Secretary of State George Schultz, a participant in Project Democracy, indicated, for most of the work in "strengthening the institutions of democracy" in target countries "we will rely on American nongovernmental organizations to carry most of the load" (p. 107). The Clinton administration, in coming into office,

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immediately enhanced the NED and other "democracy promotion" programs, increasing the 1993 NED budget by 40 percent and replacing the ODI with the Center for Democracy and Governance, the aim of which, according to the new administration, was "to centralize and globalize all democratization policies and programs" (p. 100).

These political interventions in foreign countries for the purpose of "democracy promotion" are aimed at not simply encouraging democracy, but at producing "regimented" or "low intensity" forms of democracy, i.e. elitist-polyarchic systems geared to the needs of the U.S. imperial order. The central emphasis is on building hegemony within civil society through the penetration of and cooptation of labor movements, media, women's and youth movements, and peasant organizations. As Robinson admirably sums up these actions:

> The aim is to construct in intervened countries an exact replica of the structure of power in the United States. This is done by strengthening existing political parties and other organizations identified as congenial to U.S. interests, or by creating from scratch new organizations where ones do not already exist. With few exceptions, the leaders of these organizations are drawn from the local elite and their efforts are aimed at competing with, or eclipsing, existing broad-based popular organizations and neutralizing efforts by popular sectors to build their own organizations in civil society (p. 105).

The U.S. preference for polyarchy, Robinson points out, does not mean that authoritarian regimes are no longer supported. "As a general rule, authoritarian regimes are supported until or unless a polyarchic alternative is viable and in place" (p. 113). For example, the U.S. strongly supported Marcos in the Philippines, even declaring his regime "democratic," until a popular democratic movement began to topple his regime, leading the United States to intervene politically to create polyarchic organizations that would limit democracy.

The Philippines is just one of four detailed case studies that constitute the bulk of Robinson's analysis in his book—the others are Chile, Nicaragua and Haiti. These were all high profile "democratic transitions" in which the United States was heavily engaged. The Philippines and Chile experienced transitions from right-wing dictatorships to conservative civilian regimes. Nicaragua underwent a transition from a popular revolutionary government to a conservative polyarchic regime. Haiti saw a

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transition from a dictatorship to a popular government and then to an unstable polyarchy within a brief six-year period. Each of these cases of democratic transition have been heavily promoted as success stories of U.S. foreign policy.

One characteristic of Robinson's study that sharply distinguishes it from other recent books on democratic transition is that Robinson in each case places these events in the larger historical context of U.S. imperialism. Huntington, in contrast, manages to discuss the Chilean transition without devoting a single entire sentence to the U.S.-sponsored coup against the Allende government (Allende's name appears only once in his book). Likewise, the names of Samoza and the Duvaliers each appear only once in Huntington's book (in the same sentence), despite his emphasis on the transitions in Nicaragua and Haiti. Huntington sums up the history of U.S. military interventions in Central America and the Caribbean by stating, "On occasion, in support of democracy the United States Navy has sailed into the waters of the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Panama and Grenada. It might conceivably at some point sail into Cuban waters on that mission."[13]

What Robinson discovered with respect to the democratic transitions in the four countries he studied is that: "In all four countries, cross-class majorities had coalesced into national democratization movements against U.S.-backed authoritarian regimes, yet behind these majoritarian movements were distinct visions of what type of social order should follow dictatorship. Opposition elites sought the establishment of polyarchic political systems and free market capitalism" (p. 334). It was to such opposition elites rather than to the more popular democratic organizations and movements that the U.S. channeled its political aid. "Chile's new polyarchic rulers," Robinson tells us, "were, if anything, more committed than their authoritarian predecessors to neo-liberalism" (p. 199). In Nicaragua, the Sandinistas, struggling to survive in the context of a U.S.-sponsored military intervention, sought international legitimacy by institutionalizing polyarchy at the expense of participatory democracy, giving the conservative elite elements of the society additional institutional leverage and facilitating further U.S. political intervention. This contributed to a dramatic decline in popular support for the Sandinista cause. Indeed, as Robinson explains, U.S. strategy to unseat the Sandinistas can be explained in Gramscian terms:

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> The overall goal became to create in Nicaraguan civil society a counter-hegemonic bloc, in the Gramscian sense, to the hegemony won by Sandinismo in the anti-dictatorial struggle. The war of attrition was a powerful, ongoing war of destruction. It was not enough to destroy the revolution; a viable alternative had to be constructed. The new forms of internal political intervention brandished by US operatives would develop such an alternative. Between 1987 and 1990, the crucial battle for hegemony was waged in Nicaraguan civil society between the Sandinistas and a transnational alliance led by the United States and a reorganized Nicaraguan elite. This battle climaxed in the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas as the culmination of the war of attrition (p. 221).

U.S. spending to influence the Nicaraguan elections in this period totaled "$30 million, or some $20 per voter. In contrast, George Bush spent less than $4 per voter in his own 1988 campaign" (p. 226). Despite all of its efforts to politically shape these countries, however, the United States was less than successful in creating stable neoliberal democracies in Nicaragua and Haiti, where popular resistance remained strong and where elites were "unable to coalesce effectively" (p. 337).

At the end of his book Robinson also provides discussions of U.S. political interventions into the transitions in Russia and South Africa. Between 1984 and 1992 alone, the NED spent $50.5 million in the former Soviet bloc. A month after the collapse of the USSR *The Washington Post* declared: "Preparing the ground for last month's triumph was a network of overt operatives who during the last 10 years have quietly been changing the rules of international politics. They have been doing in public what the CIA used to do in private—providing money and moral support for pro-democracy groups, training resistance fighters, working to subvert communist rule" (p. 323).

The promotion of neoliberal democracy in the third world, to complement neoliberal economic restructuring, demonstrates nothing, it would seem, so much as the long arm of the U.S. imperial state. The types of political operations described have a long history, as old as imperialism. Even promotion of polyarchy is not exactly new. What has changed, as Robinson demonstrates, is the extent and sophistication of such operations. Today "democracy promotion" has become a means of opening up states to the forces of international economic restructuring. The fact that polyarchy is essentially a system of "market democracy," means that such "democracy" offers no real protection against the harsh world of market fetishism.

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To have explained how imperialism works in this respect is enough of an accomplishment for any book, and Robinson is to be thanked for so thoroughly demystifying the so-called "democracy promotion" efforts of the United States and other advanced capitalist states. He attempts, however, to do much more, organizing his book from beginning to end around the theme of globalization. Here the argument is that capitalism is rapidly becoming a globalized economic system, with hegemony within that system passing not from the United States to some new hegemonic state, but from the United States to an emerging transnational elite. In other words, the new globalized economy requires a complementary globalized politics. Yet the transnational corporate elite can only become a political reality if its global hegemony is rooted in global civil society and extends upwards to the state and transnational institutions. In Gramscian terms, what we see emerging, according to Robinson, is a global-capitalist historic bloc, which must be countered by a global counter-hegemonic movement. As he puts it: "The globalization of production involves a hitherto unseen integration of national economies and brings with it a tendency toward uniformity, not just in the conditions of production, but in the civil and political superstructure in which social relations of production unfold. A new 'social structure of accumulation' is emerging which is for the first time global" (p. 32).

This thesis is an interesting and provocative one. It lends unity to Robinson's analysis in his book. But there is little in the book itself that demands that one interpret the developments he describes as constituting political globalization on behalf of a new hegemonic bloc of transnational corporate capital. One does not need the concept of globalization simply to analyze imperialism. But to raise these doubts about his argument is not to detract from the real substance of *Promoting Polyarchy*. One might well dissent from (or remain skeptical about) Robinson's thesis that "a 'transnational managerial class'" has appeared "at the apex of the global class structure" (p. 33) and still benefit enormously from the critical analysis that he provides. No one on the left can afford to ignore the neoliberal state, as it has developed in the advanced capitalist world, and the ominous implications of its export to the third world and Eastern Europe. "Polyarchy in the emergent global society," Robinson concludes, "has as little to do with democracy as 'socialism' in the former Soviet bloc had to do with socialism.... A democratic socialism founded on a popular democracy may be humanity's 'last, best' and perhaps only, hope" (p. 384).

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NOTES

1. Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1942), pp. 284-85. It is of course an oversimplification to follow Schumpeter in conflating democratic theories from the time of the Greek polis to the liberal democratic theory of John Stuart Mill under the common designation of "the classical theory of democracy." But when compared to later pluralist definitions—in which democracy no longer raises issues of substance, only form—the contrast between "classical" conceptions and polyarchy is indeed stark. For more nuanced historical views of these changes in the concept of democracy see C.B. Macpherson, *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press); Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 204-32; and David Held, *Models of Democracy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).
2. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, p. 269.
3. See Macpherson *The Life and Times*, pp. 77-92.
4. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, p. 242. On Schumpeter's broader conception of political economy, see John Bellamy Foster, "The Political Economy of Joseph Schumpeter: A Theory of Capitalist Development and Decline," *Studies in Political Economy*, no. 15 (Fall 1984), pp. 5-42.
5. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, p. 242; Peter Bachrach, *The Theory of Democratic Elitism: A Critique* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967).
6. Samuel P. Huntington, "The United States," in Michel Crozier, Samuel P. Huntington and Joji Watanuki, *The Crisis of Democracy* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), pp. 113-15.
7. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).
8. Michel Crozier, "Western Europe," in Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki, *The Crisis of Democracy*, p. 55.
9. As Robinson (p. 23) points out, the term "Italian school" has been used in international relations theory to designate the work of Cox and Gill, which relies on Gramscian notions of hegemony. See Robert Cox, *Production, Power, and World Order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); Stephen Gill, ed., *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
10. The admiration of the pluralist democratic theorist Robert Dahl for Mosca is quite evident in his analysis of the latter's work—despite Dahl's rejection of Mosca's notion that democracy (or polyarchy) is consistent with minority domination. For Dahl, the notion of hegemony—as evident in the work of Italian theorists such as Mosca and Michels on the right and (more notably) Gramsci on the left—is too "indirect" a mechanism to suggest that elites or ruling classes rule (as opposed to govern). See Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 265-79.
11. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), pp. 12, 263.
12. Ibid., p. 210.
13. Huntington, *The Third Wave*, p. 285.

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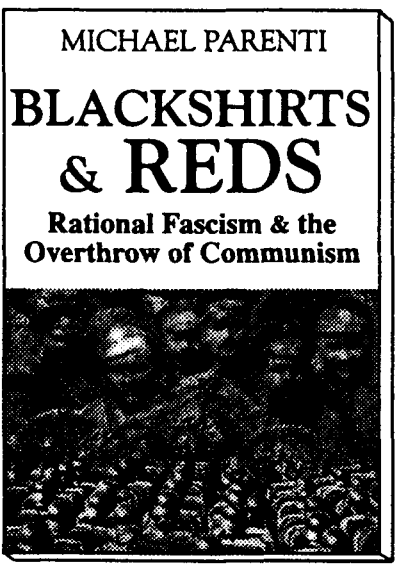

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(Continued from inside front cover)

end of July, we have experienced a five-consecutive month decline in producer prices which he says is "very odd" since "prices usually rise after a long upsurge. In 1989, an analogous point to 1997 in the last business cycle, inflation was running at 5 percent a year."

Can these developments be specific to the United States? To answer this question we have collected material from recent issues of a number of business periodicals:

First, an article on an inside page of the July 21, 1997 Wall Street Journal headlined "Many Focus on Deflation, Yes, Deflation." Here are Excerpts:

"As prices for many commodities around the globe slide, some economists predict that supply will continue to outstrip demand, despite a healthy global economy, driving prices even lower.... Gold, a traditional hedge against inflation is down 11 percent so far this year: crude oil has slumped 26 percent in the same time. Broader indexes are also dropping...." "If you look at goods and forget about services, we're moving toward deflation," says Bruce Steinberg, chief economist at Merrill Lynch and Co. "In many sectors, prices are going down because there's plenty of capacity to produce just about anything." "Despite strong growth, there does appear to be ample supply in most, commodities," says James Steel, an analyst for Refco, Inc. in New York who follows industrial metals and energy. "While supplies are increasing worldwide, bottlenecks in production and refining are being cleared out in the United States, applying still more downward pressure on commodity prices."

What about Asia which has been a star performer in the global economic upsurge of recent years? Is there any indication of a turn toward deflation in that part of the world? News from South Korea and China, both major actors, suggests that such development may be in the cards. *Business Week* (August 4) features a report on South Korea under the headline "Quaking in Seoul. Now the banks are in trouble too." It seems that most of the *Chaebols*, huge monopolistic conglomerates that dominate the country's economy, are in deep financial trouble which is dragging the big banks down with them. "Over the next three to five years, the Korean economy will have to work off overcapacity in virtually every sector of industry" says Rhee Numuh, an economist with Dongbang Peregrine Securities. That sounds like a formula for heavy deflationary pressures.

Perhaps the most interesting case is China. Here are excerpts from a report by Mark O'Neill in the (Hong Kong) *South China Morning Post* of July 22, 1997:

Having brought down inflation with a three-year austerity campaign late last year, the mainland started to ease credit and money supply. The results have been unexpected.... Factory inventories have risen to record levels,

(Continued on page 22)

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